BT 1101 .M64 1917
Moment, John James, 1875-
Faith in Christ

FAITH IN CHRIST

FAITH IN CHRIST

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
MAY 29 1917
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BY
JOHN J. MOMENT

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK 1917

COPYRIGHT, 1917, BY
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

Published April, 1917

TO THE OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE HIGH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEWARK, NEW JERSEY, IN SINCERE APPRECIATION OF THEIR UNFAILING FRATERNITY, THEIR GENEROSITY, THEIR LOYALTY TO CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH, AND THEIR COURAGE IN SERVICE

PREFACE

We have travelled a long road intellectually during these three or four centuries since the various groups of Reformers, each in its own fashion, revised the creeds of Augustine and the early councils.

We have invented new instruments for our science, more revolutionary in their way than the steam-engine and the motor-car. We have developed new processes of thought, more revolutionary still. We have shifted our point of view from its previous proud position at the centre of the universe to a very modest location on a satellite of one of an innumerable conglomeration of suns. Altogether we have achieved for ourselves a new world more radically than if we had packed our baggage and migrated to Mars. One need not be surprised, therefore, if the ancient theologies seem to the ordinary man of to-day, not merely unsatisfactory, which would be bad enough, but uninteresting, which is hopelessly worse.

Yet wisdom will not die with us, and neither was it born with Galileo, or with Bacon, or Charles Darwin. Ogniben concealed no meagre depth of thought beneath the frivolity of expression when he said: "A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others: and so he re-states it, to the confusion of somebody else in due time." Our new truth, when it has at last come to maturity, ordinarily turns out to be but the amplification of a truth so old as almost to have been forgotten.

This book attempts a brief definition and defense of faith in Christ which shall be frankly modern both in its presuppositions and in its modes of thought; but I shall be much disappointed if we do not get far enough in our thinking to become aware, at every point, of our spiritual kinship with the past.

I am under peculiar obligations to Presi-

dent William Douglas Mackenzie, of Hartford Theological Seminary, for his goodness in going over the manuscript and giving me the benefit of invaluable suggestions; which is only a small part of my debt to him. He must not, however, be assumed to stand sponsor for any of my theological positions.

J. J. M.

CONTENTS

I. THE DEMOCRACY OF TRUTH

		PAGE
I.	The Priest in Tweeds	1
II.	The Voice Within as the Voice of God	18
III.	The Inspiration of the Bible	27
IV.	Modern Bibliomancy	32
V.	The Credibility of Scripture	36
VI.	Our Independence of Scripture	44
VII.	The Need of Authority	53
VIII.	The Authority of the Bible	66

II. THE SON OF MAN

I.	The Search for Truth	71
II.	The Heart of the Creed	78
III.	Creed and Conduct	84
IV.	Life's Complexities	93
V.	Faith and Conversion	98
VI.	The Travail of Rebirth	104
VII.	Faith's Lapses	111
VIII.	The Light of the World	120

III. THE SON OF GOD

PAGE

I. The Eccentricities of Doubt 128
II. The Madness of Atheism 135
III. The Character of God 143
IV. Signs 151
V. Popular Theology 154
VI. The Image of the Invisible 159

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT

I. God in the Soul 165
II. The Unity of the Spirit 180
III. God in Society 184
IV. The Kingdom of God 191

V. THE CROSS

I. The Problem of Providence 208
II. His Own Interpreter 215
III. The Revelation of the Cross 222
IV. Light from the Wilderness 228
V. The First Commandment 237
VI. The Love of God 246
VII. Easter 253

FAITH IN CHRIST

I

THE DEMOCRACY OF TRUTH

I

THE PRIEST IN TWEEDS

At the very outset of all religious inquiry the question presents itself of where we are to find our spiritual authority. As in our investigation of the facts of history and science we have our obvious sources and our fairly well-established rules of evidence, so when we come to discuss questions of right and wrong, of God and immortality, those deeper facts of the world of the unseen which has its centre in the soul of every man and which reaches out beyond the stars and across the grave, there also we must have some substantial basis on which our knowledge may rest.

Time was when men in search of spiritual truth turned with implicit trust to the priest; for the priest was properly the bearer of God's messages to men no less than of men's gifts and prayers to

God. He was supposed to be in possession of the hidden sources of knowledge. For common folk a veil hung before the mysteries, but for him the veil parted; while others listened and looked in vain, he heard the Voice beneath the thunder and saw the Face behind the sun.

It was very easy in that day for men to think of a particular group of their fellows as invested with special powers and attributes. The king's robes, the peasant's smock-frock, the national costume of a people, no less than the priest's vestments, were symbolic of qualities in which the very souls of men were supposed to be clothed.

To-day, however, the priest lays aside his vestments to play tennis; an endowment so easily relinquished cannot be taken too seriously. King, farmer, soldier, postman, and butler alike discard their liveries when they turn from business to pleasure; the regimentals have become the mere badge and convenience of a trade.

No man but may don the most rigorous uniform of the gentleman after six P. M., and none, in America and England at

least, may assume such dignity before this hour; during the daytime we are all supposed to be workmen and—with certain concessions to elegance—must dress as such.

A New York débutante flutters about the ballroom in a Paris gown, a Chinese mandarin strolls out of an afternoon beneath a top-hat made in London, and, behold! we are aware that Paul's astounding dictum is no longer astounding but a commonplace; the world confesses that "he hath made of one every nation of men."

The common nature of humanity is an axiom of our thought. And as we know that sovereign and subject, swordsman and penman, Aryan and Asian, for all their differences, are yet of one clay, so we know the priest to be a man like other men, with no secret passage into the sanctuary. His oracles have to pass muster under the scrutiny of our common sense or find themselves ignominiously dismissed. The most modest member of my congregation feels himself quite capable of passing judgment on the morning sermon, and he would do so still, I am

confident, though I should replace my Geneva gown by a surplice and wear my collar reversed. For men of modern mind, the anointed priesthood, with its magic rites and peculiar privileges, is a superstition.

Within recent generations the Bible has come to occupy the position of the ancient priesthood. To it, we have been told, and not to any man, however anointed and prayed over, we must turn for light on the mysteries of the unseen. But to seek a solution of the problem of revelation by this means is much like trying to solve a puzzle by throwing it into your neighbor's yard. Along our familiar streets no fairies lurk, a man might say, but who knows what gossamer wings rustle among the forests of Arcady? In the twentieth century, we are agreed, no select group of diviners enjoys the privilege of the open vision, but we still cling to the idea that centuries ago conditions may have been very different; that the prophets of Scripture may have been the divinely anointed company to whom, in very truth, the Glory was revealed and the secret messages whispered.

Clearly enough the writers of Scripture did assume to be in possession of a revelation, but we shall do well to ask how far they assumed this as a privilege peculiar to themselves. Peter himself, archetype of our most exalted modern pontifex, explicitly preached that the entire Christian community constituted a "royal priesthood,"[1] and though we have commonly assumed that to make the priesthood universal amounted to about the same thing as abolishing the institution altogether, Peter evidently did not intend to abolish it; he supposed, in his simplicity, that he was merely extending it. Throughout the New Testament the quaint, old-fashioned doctrine is, that every man may be admitted to the high, priestly privilege; that, as the Reformers insisted, there is an "immediate relation existing between every human soul and the Fountain of Truth."[2] John sets forth the doctrine in its most extravagant form: "Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things."[3]

[1] I Peter 2 : 5, 9.
[2] D'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation*, vol. I, p. 68.
[3] I John 2 : 20.

Certain sects have taken the doctrine quite literally, and have felt so sure of their direct, supernatural revelation that they have dispensed with the Bible entirely. But to most of us this mysticism has a flavor no less antique and exotic than that of the anointed priesthood itself. We may have dispensed largely with the Bible, but we have done so rather because we have lost faith in all revelations than because we have found a more satisfactory medium elsewhere. Certainly no messages have flashed for us amid the play of the lightnings, no dæmonic voices call to us in the solitude, and no angel visitants come to lend a meaning to our dreams.

Nevertheless, upon us the priest's blood-spattered mantle has indeed fallen. That we fail to recognize it on our own shoulders comes of the change of fashions it has suffered with the years. For its typical modern cut carries no suggestion of altars and liturgies; it is not even that of the gown or cassock or high-buttoned waistcoat—mere toys these for our clerical doll play—but that of those more mysteriously symbolic garments in which John Bright stood be-

fore the queen, the working clothes of a democracy.

The veil of the temple is rent in twain, and we enter, you and I, common men, into the Holy of Holies. We may approach reverently, like the priest of old, for an hour of prayer; more often we drop in casually, to speak our mind on some current political question, or to pass judgment on our next-door neighbor, not at all suspecting the awful Presence into which we have come.

For no man expresses an opinion as to what heaven must be, or as to what earth ought to be; as to what is right or wrong in conduct, or what is true or false in principle; no man passes a moral judgment, or dares in his own right to criticise the ethics of a political or commercial policy, but he is high-handedly usurping the ancient, sacred prerogatives of the priesthood. And there is none of us so humble-minded but that he is assuming these prerogatives every day of his life. It is not even optional with us; we know that we must play the priest for ourselves whether we will or not, that we are individually responsible for our own convic-

tions. The ultimate appeal has definitely passed, from all external authority whatsoever, to the mind and conscience of the individual concerned.

The revolution which has been thus effected, however, has been by no means so fundamental as surface indications would lead us to suppose. Even in the old days the people had much more authority, and the priest much less, than the forms implied. Men took the priest's word for it that he had been in direct communion with the Unseen and were willing in consequence to base their beliefs on the sure ground of his knowledge. But there was a limit to their credence; they insisted that he should tell them nothing except that which they already believed. You never caught the priest coming out of the sanctuary with a bit of news. From age to age, with religious fidelity, he mumbled the same formularies, and from age to age he emerged from the mystic Presence to preach the same truths. Or, if there was any advance in his teachings, it was carefully disguised as the mere, gradual, inevitable unfolding of the old principles. Let him dare to astonish

the world with a brand-new revelation, and he would see how his temerity would fare. Men would not, of course, have done anything so revolutionary as to deny the validity of priestly authority; they would merely have torn the robes from him as a manifest impostor.

In ancient Israel so utterly did the priesthood fail as the medium of revelation that the teaching function passed from its keeping altogether and developed an order of its own, the order of prophets. And the authority of the prophets, even more patently than that of the priests, was rooted in the moral and spiritual sense of the audience addressed. The people themselves would doubtless have said that they accepted the prophet's teachings for the mere reason that he *was* a prophet and so had received his messages from God. But how did they know he was a prophet? The Deuteronomic rule,[1] that the true prophet should be distinguished from the false by the fulfilment of his predictions, could obviously have been of little practical service. Indeed, another rule[2] specifically provided

[1] Deuteronomy 18 : 20 *ff.* [2] Deuteronomy 13 : 1 *ff.*

that the false prophet should be put to death even though his predictions were fulfilled. The truth is that that prophet was recognized as true whose words carried conviction in the minds of his hearers, so that, ultimately, the message was not accepted on the authority of the prophet; on the contrary, the prophet was accepted on account of the compelling truth of his message.

And through all the years of Christian history have not devout men consistently testified that their faith in the truths of the gospel was based on their living knowledge of God, their consciousness of reconciliation and their experience of fellowship with him?

Cardinal Newman accepted implicitly the doctrine of papal infallibility, but, more thoughtful than most worshippers at the shrine of external authority, he was aware that his acceptance of the papal mandates must finally rest, not on his belief in papal infallibility, but on his own spiritual insight into the truths which those mandates presented. "Nothing can be imposed on me," he says, "different in kind from what I already hold—much

less contrary to it. The new truth which is promulgated, if it is to be called new, must be at least homogeneous, cognate, implicit, viewed relatively to the old truth. It must be what I may even have guessed, or wished, to be included in the apostolic revelation; and at least it will be of such a character that my thoughts readily concur in it, or coalesce with it, as soon as I hear it."[1]

Designing priests have undoubtedly deceived their people many times, foisting on them opinions and beliefs which had little or no relation to the moral judgment of the people themselves. The example of Joseph Smith is evidence enough that to this day the ruse of a special revelation may work, even when it works havoc; and yet the Mormon prophet did not delude his followers into any beliefs which, for reasons of their own, they were not abundantly ready to accept.

The priest's power of deception is severely circumscribed, according as his power of persuasion is circumscribed. The idea that a people, except, perhaps, in the last stages of degenerate ignorance, may

[1] *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, Everyman's Library Edition, p. 227.

be so priest-ridden as to believe anything the priest tells them, is nonsense. They will believe what the priest tells them just so long as he is properly guarded in his utterances. Newman insists that the Pope himself has been scrupulously careful not to issue his infallible decrees until the Church at large has leisurely, in the course of centuries, made up its mind as to what it believes and that then he has been content to register the popular decision.

According to Newman, that is, the Pope has never attempted to play spiritual leader to his people; and therein he has shown himself wise, in the way of the world; for the prophet, priest of a new message, has of necessity a hard battle to fight. He can never transplant a conviction, any more than a humorist can transplant his enjoyment of a joke. At best he can but point his pupils to the truth which he has seen, in the hope that they, too, will see it for themselves. He will do well to arrest their attention by all the arts at his command, but, whatever his powers, he must make up his mind to wait upon the slow vision of the crowd.

Proverbially, the prophet is without honor in his own country, before his first audience. For his crown he must expect a dunce's cap, and when the mocking ceases it is likely to be succeeded, not by honor, but by reviling. First we despise him, and then kill him, and then—garnish his tomb! How through the centuries, he has donned his mantle of flame as if it had been a royal robe! In death he has seen, not the final doom of failure, but the first gleaming promise of success. He had known something immeasurably more bitter than death, more cruel than the tongue of fire, the lion's claw; he had known hearts that were fat, eyes that were blind, ears that were deaf. Men do not kill another for talking Greek; that they cared enough to kill him meant, he knew, that they had begun to understand.

For every man the perception of spiritual truth must always be in a sense priestly, immediate. It must flash out of the soul itself, or remain hidden.

For example, I may hold this man to be of loftier soul than another because he is more generous-minded toward his

enemies. If you take issue with me, I may bring such evidence as I please in support of his magnanimity; but if you insist that a generous-minded attitude toward one's enemies is of itself not a virtue but a weakness, how then shall I set about to bring you to my way of thinking? The ordinary arguments at once appear predestined to futility, and the testimony of other men will not much avail. For yourself must you recognize the force and beauty of the truth which I preach, appreciate the inherent merit of magnanimity in some such fashion as the artistically trained soul appreciates a masterpiece of painting, or the scales remain over your eyes.

"Whilst the doors of this temple stand open, night and day," said Emerson, "and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely; it is an intuition. It can never be received at second hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction but provocation, which I can receive from another soul. What he announces, I must find true in me, or reject; and on his word, or as his second, be he who he may, I can accept

nothing."[1] And the principle is precisely that set forth nearly two thousand years ago by certain other preachers in relation to the truths which they were proclaiming: "The things of the Spirit . . . are spiritually judged."[2] "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."[3] "Why even of yourselves," Christ asked, "judge ye not what is right?"[4]

So far is revelation from within and not from without that, more often than not, it does not come even in the teacher's presence. Suddenly I become aware of a truth which hitherto had escaped me; for an instant I stand alone on the proud eminence of my discovery; and then, a passage from Carlyle or Browning comes flashing to my mind, a verse from Paul, a paragraph from Augustine, a half-forgotten word from my father's counsel in boyhood, mayhap even a sentence from last Sunday's sermon; no long time is it till my solitary eminence is peopled with poets, prophets, seers, the wise of all time. This discovery of mine, I realize, is none

[1] An address delivered before the senior class in Divinity College, Cambridge, Sunday evening, July 15, 1838.
[2] I Corinthians 2 : 14. [3] I John 5 : 10. [4] Luke 12 : 57.

other than that which they have been trying to teach me from the beginning, but which I have been too dull to understand, and my triumph is chastened by humiliation.

I remember once, when a boy, reading a book of verses in celebration of that brown season which intervenes between the flaming colors of autumn and the white of winter's snows. I read the verses probably because of some fascination in their language and rhythm, for I certainly had no sense of the beauties they were depicting. The glory of budding spring was open to me, of summer fields, of autumn woods, of snow-covered landscape; but the glory of brown earth strewn with wilted leaves and surmounted by barren trees was entirely meaningless and unreal. I had been aware of no such glory, and after reading the verses I was aware of none still. But one day, how long afterward I have quite forgotten, I walked out through the fields in this unpretentious season, looking, not for beauty, but for rabbits, when of a sudden my attention was caught by the mellow tones of ploughed ground, the faded gold of shrubbery along

the fences, the tangled grace of leafless branches, and, through the lacework of the trees, the metallic gleam of light-filled skies. I remembered the verses and knew that the poet had told the truth.

Unaided by a quicker eye than my own, I should probably never have seen. This is the inspiration of the artist, that he sees first; the rest of us walk through the world unheeding till he opens our eyes with his magic. And this, likewise, is the inspiration of the real and great prophet, that he finds himself on his eminence of discovery indeed alone; he is pioneer. For all successors the ascent is easier, but in each the experience of the pioneer must be in part reproduced; each must know something of the initial sense of loneliness, the surprise and joy of personal discovery.

II

THE VOICE WITHIN AS THE VOICE OF GOD

I HAVE spoken of the revelation, the intuition, the inner witness—call it what you will—as coming "from within." But this, after all, is a very indefinite account of the matter. Yesterday we knew not; to-day, suddenly, mysteriously, we know. From somewhere it has *arrived*, this that aforetime was not and now is. From men we are aware we have it not; in ourselves we found it and not in another. By what means we know not, but somehow, out of the vast truth-reservoir of the universe it has come to make of us its habitation. They of old said—the same thing, more simply—that it came from God.

It may be objected that we are taking a mere figure of speech too seriously in assuming that such knowledge *comes* from anywhere. When we see an apple lying in the roadway, or a star twinkling in the sky, it is proper enough to ask how it

happened to get there. But our perception of the apple and our appreciation of the beauty of the star, these are not *things* at all in any real sense; they are merely activities of the mind, with no actual existence of their own, and to think of them as arriving from somewhere else is utterly naïve and unscientific.

Well, if we may not speak of them as having a source, at least we may speak of them as having a cause. And what is it that causes this sudden quickening of the mind by which we are awakened to new perceptions and appreciations? We shall agree, I think, that the same creative energies which originally produced the human mind must be the author as well of every succeeding enrichment of mental power. No idea could be more absurdly naïve and unscientific than to suppose that creation ceased ten thousand or fifty million years ago. If, then, for the purposes of discussion, we consent to call these creative energies by the primitive name of God, we shall still look to him as the great and sole Revealer of truth.

"What sign showest thou?" challenged the Pharisees, and such is still the chal-

lenge of the critics of the Christian faith. "No man cometh unto me," Christ answered, "except the Father which sent me draw him."[1] Always it needs the creative energizing of the mind itself, this inner voice of a divine persuasion; and if a man finds no such attestation in his own soul, then are argument, authority, and miracle all futile alike.

Which, however, is by no means to say that the responsibility for our beliefs and unbeliefs rests entirely with God; not so easily may we slip out from under the burden of our accountability. There are many who attempt it, rigorous Calvinists without the saving inconsistencies of Calvinist piety, who give you their opinion with an air as much as to say that the important thing is not that the opinion is true, but merely that it is theirs. With the steadfastness of a cow on the railroad-track they stand their ground in the face of fact and reason, obviously convinced that their faith has seized them from on high without so much as a by-your-leave to their intelligence. In the course of time they are liable to a rude awakening.

[1] John 6 : 44.

In the hands of the logicians, it must be granted, the doctrine of God's part in the process of enlightenment, known to infamy under the name of the Doctrine of Predestination, became a libel on the divine character which any impartial judge would recognize as actionable at law. But it is to be remembered that in the days of its simplicity the doctrine was not the product of logic, it was the product of experience. Men were aware that they had become the instruments of energies which transcended them, the recipients of messages, to recur to the older figure, which had their source not in themselves but in the infinite. They saw multitudes of other men who listened to the same preaching, who read the same manuscripts, of parchment or of life, and yet remained unenlightened. The truths which to them were obvious and compelling were to others foolishness. Yet they were not conscious of being wiser or better than other men; surely they had been chosen, and chosen through no merit of their own. Their vain-seeming confidence that they were the particular favorites of the Almighty was rooted, not in vanity, but in modesty.

And why was it, in fact, that the great choice had fallen on them? We, certainly, cannot tolerate the thought that God's act was in any sense arbitrary. "Every one who hath *listened* to the Father," said Christ, "cometh unto me."[1] "Except ye turn and become as little children."[2] God's elect, like the choice spirits of studio or lecture-room, are not the most gifted but the most teachable, those who listen, those who are willing to learn. It needs only that the grace of curiosity be not smothered by conceit; it needs just that modesty of which we have already convicted the disciples.

Modern science prepared the way for the foundation of its substantial structure by the daringly destructive process of a wholesale and merciless doubt. Let us begin, said Descartes, with the assumption that we know nothing. And science has maintained its vitality for the very reason that it has held its conclusions perennially subject to revision. The very moment it loses its humility it will lose its life.

[1] John 6 : 45; *vide* translations by Weymouth, Moffatt, and Fenton.

[2] Matthew 18 : 3.

The doubt of the scientist, however, is quite different from that of the professed sceptic, whose scepticism stops short at the very point where it might begin to bear fruit for him. Though he insist on doubting all else in the face of evidence, he accepts without evidence the appalling proposition that we cannot know anything. His real affiliations are not with the scientist, but with the dogmatist; like him, he has found finality. The dogmatist rests because he knows all that is good for him to know; the sceptic rests because there is nothing that he *can* know. The sincere seeker after truth recognizes that "now we see through a glass darkly," and because of this he presses toward the day when we shall see "face to face."

Sceptic and dogmatist are blood-brothers. The man who has learned the articles of his faith from a priest or document trembles before every fresh disclosure of science. He clings to every comma of his creed, not because he is utterly confident of everything in it, but because he is at heart utterly sceptical of everything in it. He is forever afraid that the whole fabric will be proved false.

The man whose knowledge springs from within welcomes your discoveries. He is assured that, though you may correct his vision, you cannot make him unsee the truth which with his own eyes he has seen. He holds his knowledge lightly, subject always to expansion and revision, but the lightness is rooted in confidence; his is the only knowledge that is sublimely sure of itself.

"That which I have spoken I have received from God"; this testimony of Savonarola before his judges is, and evermore must be, the testimony of every real preacher, in the cathedral or at the cross-roads. Or of what use are sermons? Why, otherwise, is plagiarism in the pulpit a crime? Drill your preachers else in the arts of rhetoric and send them out to recite the great, historic homilies of the Church. We desire many things in our sermons, this one thing we demand—that they shall be the preacher's own and not another's. Were we less fastidious in this matter, we might listen to better sermons, but we tolerate all mediocrities and stupidities rather than be imposed on by parrot speaking. However little the preacher

may know, out of such knowledge as he has he must speak, or hold his peace. Such is the tribute which every congregation pays to first-hand information.

"Yourself must feel it first, your end to capture.
Unless from out the soul it well,
And with a fresh, resistless rapture
Your hearers' very hearts compel,—
You only sit and gum together,
Hash up the orts from others' feast,
Blow puny flames with lungs of leather,
From ashes whence the life has ceased;
Children and apes will gape in admiration,
If for such praise your palates thirst;
But heart to heart ye will not sway and fashion,
Save in your own heart ye feel it first." [1]

Men have raked heaven and earth for an oracle, and always at last, like romance and poetry and every other noble thing, they have found it by their own hearth fire, or it has remained undiscovered. "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that thou shouldest say, Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? Neither is

[1] *Faust*, part I. Translation by Albert G. Latham.

it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."[1] So long ago the seer told us! And so slow we have been to learn, so loath to believe!

"God is not dumb, that he should speak no more;
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness
And find'st not Sinai, 'tis thy soul is poor;
There towers the mountain of the Voice no less,
Which whoso seeks shall find."[2]

[1] Deuteronomy 30 : 11 *ff.*
[2] Lowell, *Bibliolatres.*

III

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

Timid souls still warn us that the Bible is in danger from the findings of the critics. As well might they warn us that the sun is in danger from the prying of the astronomers. A devout elder whom I knew once deprecated the study of the history of the canon in a men's Bible class for the reason, as he put it, that "you are apt to run up against queer things." I doubt if any man can sleep comfortably with the suspicion that there are "queer things" at the foundation of his faith, and happily the fears are quite superfluous.

Much of the discussion of Biblical inspiration has been wholly beside the point. The question is not as to how far the prophets spoke of their own volition, and how far they were under the spell of a higher, unseen influence. So far as they spoke the truth, truth which they had discovered in their own hearts and did not merely echo from another's words,

so far were they actually, literally, divinely inspired. And the Bible owes its supremacy among books first of all to this very fact, that its words are aglow with the burning convictions, kindled in the living experience, of the men who wrote it.

Read Ezekiel's account of his initial vision. Flaming colors, terrible creatures with far-stretching wings, a voice like the roar of mighty waters, the star-studded firmament and over it a sapphire throne surrounded by rainbow splendor—in such imagery the prophet tries to give us a sense of his first realization of the greatness and majesty of the eternal God. Before the glory of the sight he fell on his face in abject humility; who was he that he should inquire into the awful mysteries or seek to interpret to men the will of the Infinite? But suddenly, out of the glory, a Voice: "Son of man, *stand upon thy feet*, and I will speak with thee."[1]

The prophets were no prostrate, passive instruments, receiving and transmitting messages which they themselves did not understand. "Thus saith the Lord," was the solemn sanction of their preaching, as,

[1] Ezekiel 2 : 1.

indeed, it must be the sanction of all effective preaching, but they were not in any remote sense amanuenses. Their revelations are testimony to the clearness of their own vision, their eloquence is rooted in the depth and sincerity of their own feelings.

Looking out upon Israel, Amos saw luxury and sensuality rotting the heart out of the people of wealth while the poor starved. Ridiculed, rebuked, commanded to silence, he still could not restrain the flood of anger and pity which surged within him. Throughout his brief sermons we are conscious first of contact with the spirit of a righteous man, flaming with indignation at the hypocrisy which would serve God in feasts and sacrifices while it revelled in dissipation and ruthless greed.

The songs of praise with which the Old Testament is filled can never be thought of as documents handed down out of heaven, set by some superior wisdom for man's singing.

"The heavens declare the glory of God,
And the firmament sheweth his handiwork."

Better than we can tell it ourselves, this poet of a bygone age has told the story of our own emotions as we cast our eyes upward. The song which he has flung down the centuries, no man can doubt, is but the echo of a sublimer strain which first sounded in his own soul.

The Mohammedans tell us, of their Koran, that it is the work of no man, and of no company of men, but that, uncreated and unalterable, it has existed since before all beginnings, inscribed on a tablet set up in highest heaven.

The Bible, on the other hand, has never been represented as having come down out of heaven, but as having grown here on the earth. And though we believe that its seed was not vitalized by any human invention, that the showers and the sunshine which nurtured it came from above and its flowers are the flowers of Paradise, yet its roots, we know, are deep sunk in the soil of our common humanity. Defenders make a mistake when they apologize for the "human element" in the Bible. We are all familiar with their favorite figure of the sun-spots. With so much brightness and warmth, they ask,

why should one complain of an occasional flaw? It is no case for complaint. One need be no scientist to realize that the spots are of the essential nature of the sun's formation, that without them the sun would not be the sun. And if the Bible had come down out of heaven it would no longer be the Bible. God's thoughts had to become man's thoughts before they could become intelligible to men, as Christ himself could not have disclosed God to us had he not first of all been a man.

IV

MODERN BIBLIOMANCY

One method of Biblical interpretation, too childish for serious mention, but too prevalent to be passed over in silence, implies an origin for the Bible neither on earth nor in heaven, but in subterranean caverns, in witches' caves, by the light of smoking torches, beside a boiling caldron of newts and frogs. The book is searched for obscure references to future events, supposed to be embedded in the text with all the studied ambiguity of the sibyl's palm-leaves. Here is a passage which foretells the Roman Church of the twentieth century, and here a verse intended to describe the present German emperor or the prospective Russian czar. A river in Revelation prefigures modern Turkey, while a hybrid beast in Daniel has been wandering the earth like a disembodied spirit for something over two thousand years, waiting for the British Empire or the Chinese Republic to give

it substance. The mystery of future times, which Christ confessed was all dark to him,[1] yields to the exercise of a little ingenuity in discovering the key to a lost cipher!

The prophets of old Israel always made their forecasts contingent on the fidelity or the recreance of the people concerned, but these modern prophets make their forecasts contingent on nothing. They have the future reduced to chart in such mathematical fashion that there is nothing for men to do but to sit aside and watch the specifications of destruction fulfil themselves.

Without doubt, the Bible does contain forecasts of the Roman Church in the twentieth century; and also, by the same token, it contains forecasts of the Protestant Church in the twentieth century, not always flattering. It contains convincing portraits of German kaiser and Russian czar, and also of the maid in your kitchen and of the child in your nursery, and of me and of you. It reveals springs of history precisely as true of England and America and Siam as of Assyria and

[1] Mark 13 : 32.

Babylon and Israel. Its oracles strike home to-day, with the nation and with the individual, for the very reason that they struck home in the day when they were first delivered; directed as they were, not at anything transitory and accidental, but at that which is permanent and universal in humanity.

The Bible is the last book on earth of which to try to make a fortune-teller's manual. It was not produced in a cave; every page is asparkle with the play of sunlight and fresh air, much of it having been written, literally, in the open, under the wide skies that arch the Syrian hills, with a breeze from the Mediterranean fluttering the parchment. Its songs have nothing even of that stuffy atmosphere of the closet and the death-chamber which lurks in many a corner of our modern hymnals. Entire books were transcribed, almost verbatim, from the stories which mothers told their children, of the heroes of the nation and the stirring events of the past, in a day when the only public school was at the door-step of the home. More of it yet was transcribed, entirely verbatim, from the words of stalwart preachers, in-

veighing against the crimes of their age and calling the people to righteousness.

From cover to cover there is no place for magic cryptograms and Circean ambiguities. If John was careful not to mention the name of the Beast that he denounced, be sure the purpose of his omission was not to mystify his "little children." More credible is it that he was discreet enough not to incite the Beast to speedy vengeance. In any case, whatever obscurity we find in the apocalypses exists for us largely by reason of our ignorance of the times for which they were written; it did not exist for the original readers by reason of their ignorance of our times. The writers did not intend, in cold-blooded mockery, to mystify their readers; they intended to enlighten and hearten them in the face of pressing perils.

The Bible is no wonder-book; it is literature. Its appeal is not to the wizard in us but to the man in us. It is not concerned with divinations; it is concerned with the conduct of life.

V

THE CREDIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE

I KNOW no means of authenticating the Bible in block. On the contrary, there is no questioning the fact that it contains laws which it would be crime or folly to obey, and inconsistencies which it would be dishonesty to evade. So much is conceded by the scholars of every school, radical and conservative alike.

Here, for example, is a law from an ancient code: "Thou shalt not eat anything that dieth of itself; thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is within thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien; for thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God." [1] Not a neighborly distinction, we agree; and if we should detect our Jewish butcher serving us meat on this principle, it would require something more than a quotation from Deuteronomy to reconcile us to his

[1] Deuteronomy 14 : 21.

business methods. Explicit permission to sell diseased meat to foreigners! We stand aghast at such sheer, brazen immorality. The same verse closes with another injunction: "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk," and most of us would not insist on the inclusion of this bit of legislation in modern cook-books for all its threefold repetition in the Mosaic law.

Many of the Biblical laws are no longer honored by any of us; like the laws of sacrifice, eating, and dress; like the law prohibiting interest on loans[1] which embarrassed the commerce of Europe for many centuries, but which we have now agreed to forget, as far as the socialists will allow us; like the law which sent the leper out to beg his living on the streets, crying "unclean" to all the passers-by[2]—we have discovered a more humane method of dealing with lepers.

Various historical discrepancies also appear in the Bible which the most uncompromising defenders of the faith have never thought of denying. At most they

[1] Exodus 22 : 25. Ezekiel 18 : 8.
[2] Leviticus 13 : 45 *f.*

assure us that the errors must have crept in through the carelessness of copyists, that in the original manuscripts there were no such imperfections. And they may well challenge us to disprove their argument, for there is no possible way by which we may know what was in the original manuscripts; but neither, so far as I can see, is there any possible reason why we should care what was in them. They will surely not ask any man to believe that an "original" Bible, now lost beyond hope of recovery, has anything in particular to do with the salvation of his soul. *Our* Bible, we are all agreed, has mistakes in it, and who will can make the most of them.

Many Christian people, it is true, are disturbed by the thought of inaccuracies in the Bible and think it impolitic, or impolite, to mention them. They have become persuaded that the validity of their Christian experience is somehow bound up with the historicity of Jonah and Daniel, so that it is really not surprising that they should resent sceptical criticism of these books. And many of the critics themselves have not been wiser; in discrediting such

narratives they have believed that they were doing just that of which faint-hearted believers accused them, that they were actually undermining the whole structure of our religion.

When the scientist declared that the world was round in the face of many plain Biblical references to the contrary, there was panic in one camp and satisfaction in the other. When science announced that the world had not been created in six days, again there was a common feeling that the very existence of Christianity was at stake. But Christianity is still with us while the prophets of evil are all but forgotten. And so it will be to the end of time, or until we learn that Christianity is not dependent on the accuracy of Biblical history and science.

The writers of Scripture got their science from the age they lived in, and they got their history where they could find it; in scores of instances they tell us just what the sources of their information were. Their claim to distinction lies not in any magical knowledge which they possessed but in that spiritual insight, which was indeed a gift of God, and by means of

which they took the incidents at hand, whether from history or tradition, and made them the vehicle for the teaching of great spiritual truths.

What difference, for example, whether Jonah be history or parable? The moral of the book is not that God is strong enough to rescue a man out of a fish's maw, but that the love of God is broad enough to embrace a pagan city like Nineveh. And the miracle, were it established, would be to us no evidence of the truth of the lesson. If we have not proven in our own experience that the love of God has been wide enough to reach across the Atlantic and embrace America, we shall surely not be moved to credence by the peculiar marine experiences of a renegade prophet of three thousand years ago.

Scoffers point to the many contests between science and religion in which science has achieved final and complete triumph, but they fail to notice that religion has ordinarily emerged from the contest stronger than before. If history proves anything, it proves that religion with its Bible is proof against such attacks, not as a fort may be—or may not be—proof

against cannon-balls, but as patriotism is proof against cannon-balls.

The doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture is not a dogma received from the skies, to be accepted or rejected in accordance with our opinion of its credentials; it is a truth mined out of experience, to be certified only by experience. Through the Bible men have found that their eyes have been opened to spiritual facts which otherwise they had missed, but which, having once seen, they can no more deny than they can deny their own existence.

We are under no obligation to believe any word of Scripture for the mere reason that it is Scripture; we also must stand upon our feet.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"; this do we accept? Then so far, at least, we accept the Bible. This do we deny? Then is there certainly no hope that we shall ever be persuaded to accept it on the authority of Genesis. And so we may go through the book, sentence by sentence, chapter by chapter, from cover to cover.

When the Ephesians told Paul that they had not so much as heard whether there

were any Holy Spirit, he entered into no theological argument, but when he "laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them."[1] *There* was an argument which they could understand. Suppose he had begun by an exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity, and that they had accepted the doctrine on his authority; well, afterward they might have passed a better examination in theology, but of what particular use would the knowledge have been to them? Merely to know that there is a Holy Spirit somewhere in the universal scheme of things would be about as futile a bit of information as a man could well be possessed of. To have the omnipotent, divine Spirit take possession of your heart and life, this is a different matter!

The Bible is not a book of travel for the instruction of men who prefer the comfort of their chimney-corner to the exertions of the highroad; it is a handbook for travellers. It was not designed to reveal mysteries, hidden forever from our eyes, but so made plain to the writers of Scripture that we accept their word as

[1] Acts 19 : 6.

we accept the word of the lecturer back from the Sphinx or the Ganges. It undertakes a much more marvellous thing: so to guide us in our own invasion of the land that we may see for ourselves. For in this realm of the spirit there is no farthest journey which any man of us may not take, no remotest country which he may not explore.

The Bible demands none of your credence in its teachings, regarding either God or man, except as you are compelled to credence by virtue of the very fact that it tells the truth.

VI

OUR INDEPENDENCE OF SCRIPTURE

The desperation with which, in the face of facts, men have clung to their belief in the historical inerrancy of Scripture has been in large part due, I suppose, to a fear lest in the general wreck the Gospels also might be involved. While they might have been willing, without much qualm, to admit a question as to certain elements in the story of Methuselah or Jonah, they have not been so ready to dismiss Christ's life to the realm of legend. And yet how are we to distinguish between the two? If we are to cast doubt on any incident in Old Testament history, what prevents us likewise from casting doubt on any incident of Matthew or John?

I am not disposed to insist that men treat the New Testament on any other basis than that on which they treat the rest of the Bible, or indeed on which they treat any other historical documents. I am not afraid to submit the New Testa-

ment to all the canons of historical criticism; its evidence is not of so feeble a sort that we must make an exception in its favor and do not dare hale it before the ordinary bar of human reason.

Discard all one will of it, an irreducible minimum remains. The teachings remain. And it is one of those teachings that "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life."[1] At least, we have the "words"; there is no denying *them*. If Jesus of Nazareth did not utter them, they were beyond question uttered, for here they are, written down before our eyes.

And here also is our picture of the Christ life painted; there is no denying *it*. It holds its sacred place at the centre of almost every home in Christendom. One may say that the picture, as painted in the Gospels, contains elements that are inconsistent or incredible. Perhaps; make all the allowance for them that one will, and still, beneath whatever smudgings of the brush, we discern the portrait of a Man of very definite and remarkable character; we catch the outlines of a life of such pur-

[1] John 6 : 63.

pose and meaning as cannot be mistaken. It is quite generally agreed to be the noblest man-likeness ever conceived, the sublimest interpretation of human life ever accomplished on the earth. If we refuse to concur in this agreement, it is of little consequence what we may be pleased to think about the fidelity of the portrait. But if we do concur, and after this begin to cavil as to whether the portrait is real or fanciful, then herein is a marvellous thing, indeed: the one example in history where art has outshone nature, where man's imitation has transcended God's original.

Turner's sunsets may sometimes show more brilliant hues, but they are certainly never more beautiful than the glory which breaks across the sky of any summer evening. And when have you ever described the character of your friend but at the end of the story you have felt the utter inadequacy of your words to make men understand his heroism and attractiveness? So, I know, Thackeray felt when he had finished his picture of Colonel Newcome, and Shakespeare when he had done with Rosalind; they had known

gentlemen and gentlewomen, if not of fewer faults, at least of more excellent virtues and more seductive graces. When have you met a really great man but you have discovered in him a largeness and power beyond anything you had divined from all that you had ever heard of him?

But here were men, are we to understand, who told the story of their Friend's life in such fashion that others have seen in him a loveliness and greatness beyond any that he actually possessed, or that any man ever possessed; who have managed to achieve a fourfold portrait more exquisite in its compelling charm, more exalted in its dignity, than anything ever produced in the great miracle-shop of Nature herself! And these incomparable artists were a company of humble Judean preachers otherwise unknown to fame! The scepticism calls for heroic credulity.

One further fact confronts us, not in the Book, but in life. Down through the wide continent of human history flows no other river so majestic in its sweep as this stream which we know under the name of Christianity. If much pondering

has confused our thought on this matter, an evening's reading in the social life of any age or any land apart from its influence, or even an hour or two in any Bowery mission, will perhaps serve to quicken our appreciations. This stream must have had a source. Does the Source as depicted in the gospels seem exaggerated in view of the river of beneficence that has flowed from it? Would some lesser thing seem more convincing, or shall we think rather, that any error in our thought of Jesus probably lies in our failure to grasp anything like the full measure of his greatness?

But, after all, the first question for us is not as to our attitude toward the historical character of the record. There is a crucial, preliminary inquiry which confronts us and on which, meanwhile, the question of historic facts may wait. Which is not to say, and I do not mean, that the historical incidents were of minor importance. If Christ had not come, and lived and died as he did, we have no knowledge that the world would not be in darkness to this day. But our belief, or refusal to believe, does not in the least affect the

historic facts. Whatever specific work was needed for the salvation of men, was performed, as is abundantly evidenced by thousands of men, and thousands of thousands, saved. And that work there is no undoing. Marathon and Tours were fought, and the fruits of them are still secure, though their very memory should perish from the earth. Last year's harvest still fed the multitudes, though we have no statistics of the bushels garnered. The Deed Done is forever proof against the scepticism of later years.

But the Thought of yesterday must live on in the mind of to-day, or it is nothing. While our opinion of the record of Christ's life will have no effect whatever on the truthfulness of the record, can detract no iota from the measure of the work that was accomplished for us, our opinion of the thought which the centuries have handed down to us is beyond all reckoning fateful for ourselves and for the world.

Do we accept the gospel conception of God and of human life, of the relation between man and man and between man and God? This is the first question for

us to face, and at the outset we need not trouble ourselves in regard to any nineteen-hundred-year-old facts, however immeasurably important those facts may have been. If we do accept it, we shall find ourselves involved in consequences, unless I am much mistaken, which will make it very easy for us to believe that behind the record is reality, substance, and not shadow.

But first we must ask, What think we of these ideas of life and character which the record contains? And the substantiation of these truths of the spirit does not wait on any historic testimony or fine-spun argument. Their evidence, the only evidence to which in the nature of the case they are subject, consists in those credentials which they bear in their own heart.

"Not that we have lordship over your faith,"[1] said Paul, in a passage strangely seldom quoted; which means, if it means anything, that he had no wish arbitrarily to impose his beliefs on other men. Utterly sure as he was of the truth of his convictions, he desired others to have the same assurance in themselves, not to lean on his assurance. There is enough dy-

[1] II Corinthians 1 : 24.

namite in the little clause to blow up whole ecclesiastical hierarchies and whole theological libraries, which is perhaps one reason for the circumspection with which it has been used. And I have no mind to warn any man against Paul's spiritual leadership; before I have done with the subject I have something very specific to say by way of commending it. But neither have I any mind to quote him, or any other Biblical writer, as an authority whose word must be blindly accepted. For I recognize, as he recognized, that any truth which we should receive merely because he delivered it, because we find it in the Bible, would be no more a part of our life than the bird among the branches is part of the life of the tree.

When Paul went down to preach in Corinth, why did the Corinthians accept his teachings? Not, obviously, because of their confidence in a book; not because of any peculiar reverence for apostles, and we hear nothing of miracles. Why was Amos accepted as a prophet by the faithful in Israel? His sermons were no part of a Bible then, and again we read of no miracles by which he attested his revelation. To his contemporaries he was merely

an unordained, itinerary preacher. How does the Chinaman know that the missionary is telling the truth when he unfolds the story of Jesus Christ, explaining that the world is under the governance of one supreme God, who is not only the God but the Father of mankind, and that the highest life is to be found in that losing of self which leads to the finding of him? How does your Chinaman know that all this is not a pretty fable from the West? How does it happen that the joy of a great discovery thrills through his awakening spirit and that he also, like the disciple by the seaside, stretches out his hand and cries, My Lord and my God? The answer lies, and can lie, in nothing else than the self-evidencing power of spiritual truth.

With the Bible, as with all other books and so-called authorities, so much of it as we find true in us we must perforce accept, and so much of it as we find untrue in us we must assume that we are under the same divine compulsion to reject—though we shall be wise not to be too precipitate with our rejections, remembering that "great truths are greatly won."

VII

THE NEED OF AUTHORITY

Are we then to be plunged into a chaos of individualism, bidding farewell forever to the old dream of orthodoxy, of a body of doctrine accepted in all ages, in all lands, and by all believers: *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus?* A noble conception was this, worthy to possess the imagination of Christendom; the world would be poorer for its loss. But how is it to be saved?

Several expedients, we may remember, have already been tried. Councils of the bishops legislated, under the auspices of the emperor, but they were compelled to take up the sword by way of enforcing their legislation. It is at best a sorry uniformity that you obtain by merely killing off the dissenters, and even such mock uniformity was never achieved, for the dissenters multiplied faster than they could be disposed of.

A single, sovereign pope was the next experiment, but the result was still more conspicuously unsuccessful.

The Reformers started with a recognition of the sovereignty of the individual mind and conscience, but the old dream of uniformity was by no means abandoned. It soon appeared that the grant of liberty was accompanied with the proviso that, though thinking for themselves, all men were expected to arrive at the same conclusions. And once more the councils were called to determine what these conclusions were. Once more, likewise, heresies arose to disturb the peace of the Church.

In these latter days, however, the curse of heresy has lost not only its terror but its shame, and correspondingly orthodoxy has lost its pride. We have not only failed to achieve uniformity in our doctrine, we have ceased to desire it. The ordinary man makes a boast of the confession that he is something of a heretic; which is the inevitable end of all efforts at uniformity through decrees of popes and councils. The dream of a world-wide orthodoxy built on the recognition of a common

authority could never have resulted in any other way. Spiritual truth must be spoken, by divine voice, in the ear of the individual, and this law there is no evading. In the interest of harmony, of convenience, will you try to soften the rigor of its workings? At best you will secure a false harmony which, honored to-day, will to-morrow be despised. Any faith which we accept merely at another's word is bogus, and must go the way of all cheats and frauds.

Nevertheless, orthodoxy is not yet a forlorn hope. Its promise lies not in any unity of authority, but in the unity of truth. I accept that which is true in me, and you accept that which is true in you, but truth is not therefore duplex or multiple; it is one. If any two men think straight, they think alike; so far at least the Reformers were right.

Looking upward at night, we all see stars. If your vision is clearer than mine you may see more stars, and those which I also see you may see more sharply; but where you see stars I do not see dragons and flying-fish. Except in an utterly diseased state of the mental vision, men

apprehend as true nothing but the truth. They may see the truth dimly, distorted, but it is still truth, reality, that men see, not falsehood and unreality. It is something that is there that impresses itself on the retina, not something that is not there. The religions of India and Arabia owe their power over men, not to their delusions, but to their veracities. No wildest theory was ever promulgated and accepted on the earth, even among the faddists of our pale, parlor cults, but that some sound arguments could be adduced in support of it, and men have believed in it, in spite of its imbecilities, on account of the glimmer of truth which it contained.

In the matter of principles, no man has ever yet been entirely sincere and entirely mistaken, unless he was at the same time entirely insane. And history ought to teach us to beware how recklessly we distribute the charge of insanity. For Christians it is enough to remember that certain members of Christ's own household would have had him withdraw from his ministry because they thought he was "beside himself."[1] The extravagances of the

[1] Mark 3 : 21.

most unconventional of heretics, in art and politics and economics as well as in religion, will generally repay the philosopher's attention. They will be found always to contain some nugget of true gold, which the rest of us may possibly have overlooked. Certainly we have no right to condemn them until we qualify ourselves as critics by sympathy with the other's point of view. It is scarcely too much to say, that a man has no right to criticise any creed in which he does not believe; in which, that is, he does not appreciate the element of truth.

"Every man that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me."[1] So sure was Christ of the reality and unity of truth, and so sure also of the validity of men's spiritual perceptions. Because he spoke the truth, therefore he knew that every other man who attended to the voice within must ultimately find himself in his presence; as the man who stands on the mountain top knows that every other man who climbs and continues climbing must at last reach the same pinnacle.

[1] John 6 : 45.

This day is the old dream of a world-wide unity of Church doctrine in no small measure, not promised, but realized. There has been no day since Pentecost when it was not already more of a reality than of a dream. Origen, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Aquinas, À Kempis, Luther, Calvin, Arminius, Grotius, Fox, Wesley, Newman, Brooks—make the list as long as you will, gather it from all the schools—the men are brothers all! We link their names with little sense of incongruity. Their differences were many and conspicuous; their agreements, however less superficially conspicuous, were much more considerable. The strength of each was not so much in any article of his creed peculiar to himself as it was in that faith which he held in common with the rest.

I may seem to have dismissed the authorities completely and even contemptuously; I hasten to welcome them back with due honor. The truth is, I accept them all; not the Bible only, but popes and councils, tradition, creeds, confessions, and whatever else there may be in which good men have seemed to hear an authoritative voice.

As for my popes, I claim merely the right to a voice in their nomination. One need not be a benighted monarchist to recognize truth in the old doctrine of the divine right of kings, a divine sanction to all duly constituted government; but one may still believe that the man who now happens to occupy the seat of authority has no right to his position, either divine or human. One may agree with Newman in his general contention that a loving God would not leave the world without some living voice through which he might speak to mankind, but it remains a fair question whether the man who happens to have been elected Bishop of Rome is the chosen instrument.

Several score of Church dignitaries have gathered in an Italian hall and, after much formality, have designated the voice through which God is to speak. It is still to be determined whether God will ratify the election, whether he will indeed deliver his messages through this mouthpiece, so designated. Perhaps the procedure has been as ingenious as any that could be devised; perhaps, even, it may present a reasonable argument for divine

sanction. No matter; in simple, historic fact, is it the Bishop of Rome through whom God has made his most conspicuous revelations to mankind, in whose speech men have most clearly recognized the divine voice, who has chiefly moulded the moral and theological thought of the centuries? Newman himself says not; for purposes of his own, as we have already seen, he draws attention to the very small part the popes have taken in the development of Christian doctrine. "It is individuals," he says, "and not the Holy See, who have taken the initiative and given the lead to Catholic minds in theological inquiry."[1] I do not doubt that Newman's own influence on the thinking of Christian England, even of Roman Catholic England, was larger than that of all the popes who reigned during his career.

As my pope I shall choose the man who seems, to me and to others, actually to have spoken with divine power. The real spokesmen of divinity, the true leaders of the Church, have ever been elected by very informal methods, sometimes belatedly, always with many dissenting voices

[1] *Apologia*, p. 236.

in the beginning, but their attestation has at least lain in their own words of fire and works of power and not in the ballots of a college of cardinals.

The doctrine of papal infallibility was not made an article of faith till less than a half century ago, and it was then guarded by strict limitations. I sympathize with the hesitancy of the Roman Church to commit itself to this doctrine, finding myself of much the same mind in regard to my popes. It is a large and dangerous word, infallibility; and yet, guardedly and with due time for explanations, I should be willing to risk it.

I recognize the clearness of vision of these outstanding figures in the history of Christian thought, these spiritual geniuses of the ages, and I gladly avail myself of the privilege of walking by their light. What they announce I must, of course, "find true in me, or reject"; merely to accept their doctrines in the raw without myself seeing and feeling the necessary truth of them, would be as pusillanimous as it would be profitless. And their negations do not weigh heavily with me, for no one of them, I know, compassed the

whole range of truth. But when one of these, the Great, the Far Seeing, the Quick to Hear, announces a discovery in the world of the spirit where he is most at home, then shall I peer into the darkness to catch the same vision, I shall strain my ears to hear the same message; sure of this, that that which they saw was real and not hallucination.

I accept the doctrine of the papacy; only my popes shall be the real and great popes, fathers, in the line of the veritable Apostolic Succession, appointed of God to their high office and acclaimed by the unanimous voice of Christendom. The Roman doctrine of the papacy is a sublime truth frozen, a kingly form decked out in the crown and all the regalia of its rank and preserved in ice. "If any man willeth to do his will," said Christ, "he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God,"[1] according to which principle Alexander VI, for example, was not the one man on earth conspicuously qualified to be chosen as an oracle.

Likewise I believe in the councils. But, once more, my councils shall be real par-

[1] John 7 : 17.

liaments of Christendom, not nominated by scheming politicians, Roman emperors, or Italian prelates, or even American divines, and not constituted of those who happen by devious ways to have attained to high ecclesiastical office, but representative of the vast Christian democracy; their decisions no smooth political compromises which express the actual faith of nobody on earth, no dominating fiat of majorities, but the unanimous expression of the Christian consciousness. And there is, as I have suggested, a large body of so-called cardinal Christian doctrine in which all Christian men believe, accepted and preached wherever the name of Christ is known.

Among the various articles of faith which have been commonly accepted by the Christian consciousness of the ages, if I find some which at first reading seem to me false or meaningless, I shall not lightly trust my own perceptions, denying the thousand fold testimony of my peers and superiors; I shall be at pains to understand their meaning, hidden as it may be under the forms of ancient verbiage or outworn scientific conceptions, and to dis-

cover for myself the light of truth which they contain.

I am making no plea for the reduction of any man's creed to the terms of some common deposit of truth. It is a fair question whether the creed of the Church, or of the churches, ought not to be so reduced, but for the individual such a surrender would be suicidal and fatal in its effect on the progress of knowledge. It would be as if two men were climbing a mountain, making their way upward by different paths, each having an outlook of his own, and were of a sudden, in the interest of unity, to turn and go back till their paths should converge. The unity to be sought is not below but above.

The controversy between the advocates of external authority and the advocates of inner enlightenment is a case in point. Newman's demand for an external authority is not to be met by the mystic's account of a direct communion between the human soul and God, for we need the revelations of other men in order both to educate our own spiritual perceptions and to safeguard these perceptions against eccentricity and illusion. But neither is

the mystic's doctrine of direct communion to be categorically denied in favor of Newman's divinely appointed oracle, for all the oracles mean nothing to us except as through them our own vision is quickened to gaze, open-eyed, upon the Truth. We cannot fully understand either Newman or the mystic until we arrive at a point from which we can see that both were right, and also by the same token that both were partial and therefore so far wrong.

Whatever there be in the history of Christian thought, or of human thought for the matter of that, which any pure soul has discerned as true, especially whatever there be that any considerable group of pure-hearted men and women has discerned as true, I shall be very hesitant to dismiss as mere illusion. My faith in my own spiritual perceptions would not stand the strain of such sweeping denials; for if these men were utterly confident only to be utterly mistaken, what reason have I to assume that my own confidence is not as deceptive?

VIII

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

For nearly two thousand years Christendom has united in paying peculiar respect to a certain company of men, some known by name, others anonymous, as the pioneers in all spiritual discovery, the only wholly trustworthy guides in the land of the unseen.

The various books of the Bible were chosen out of a vast literature, not by the mere judgment of ecclesiastical assemblies, but in the gradual process of a democratic recognition of their spiritual qualities. It is true that the councils legislated a few doubtful books into the collection and, largely on doctrinal grounds, legislated a few out, but in the main they only set their seal on documents which had already established themselves in the hearts of the people. And the democracy which thus culled and preserved the books of Scripture, like the democracy which has since stamped them with its approval, consisted of those

very men and women whose own religious thinking and emotions have most conspicuously commended themselves to the respect of the world.

If we had an anthology of Greek prose and poetry collected during the course of the classical history of Greece in accordance with the consensus of the opinions of the Greek people, we should have something corresponding to the Bible in the field of pure literature; its standards æsthetic instead of, as in the Bible, religious or theological. Whatever literary crudities might be found within its covers, one would be slow to believe that any production which had been accorded a place there by the common judgment of the Greek mind was totally lacking in pronounced and even distinguished literary qualities.

Literary crudities, however, we should undoubtedly find, especially in the earlier sections, and in like fashion we must expect to find theological and moral crudities in the Bible.

It is to be remembered that the Bible did not spring into life full-grown, but is the record of a gradual revelation.

Sceptics point to Samuel's cruelty when he reported God's will to Saul, commanding that the king was to "smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." [1] And the picture does not brighten as we read on that the prophet, angered by Saul's single act of mercy in sparing the life of his fellow king, drew his own sword and "hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord." What manner of "spiritual perception" was it that so interpreted the mind of God?

It was one step in a gradual revelation, or if you please in a gradual understanding of the divine character. Saul's act of mercy, be it noted, was not really an act of mercy at all, for he spared the king not out of magnanimity but in order to swell the glory of his triumphal procession. If others had been spared, they would have owed their lives only to Saul's thirst for slaves, not to his humanity. Samuel did not make war any more merciful, it is true; he merely made it less mercenary; he merely did not consider mercy, belong-

[1] I Samuel, 15 : 3.

ing, as he did, to an age when the idea of mercy to a conquered foe had not yet arisen in the most sensitive conscience. But he did see the evil of predatory raids; there is to be no plunder, was his oracle, and this represents the only change on which he was insisting in the military code of the time. Many of the Arab tribes virtually lived on the product of their armed excursions, but henceforth we hear of no such excursions in the history of Israel.

Even the command in regard to diseased meat was doubtless an advance over former customs, in that it did prohibit the sale of such to brother Israelites. The duties a man owed to those outside his own nation had to wait until the brotherhood of Israel was widened to embrace the brotherhood of man.

Later years brought riper wisdom. From century to century the human conscience was gradually enlightened. Any schoolboy of to-day could instruct Samuel in the mind of God, but any schoolboy would not be so well qualified to instruct Paul and John, or even Amos and Isaiah. Not that these men compassed the full

range of spiritual truth, for we know they did not; the world has since learned lessons as to the application of their principles to the question of slavery, for example, which we have no reason to suppose they appreciated, which certainly they did not teach. But they were men of peculiarly sane judgment and sound convictions, of peculiarly original and genuine spiritual experience, and there are few of us, I take it, who after reading them do not feel ourselves better qualified to sit as their pupils than as their masters.

I have no desire to thrust them on any man as divinely attested authorities, as I know it would serve little purpose to try. Merely, I recognize the clearness of their spiritual vision and find my own perceptions quickened and clarified by their revelations. I remember that a very great number of other men, including the best men I have known, the best men of history, have had the same experience. And I am confident that if any man will read them, sympathetically, he will find in them what others have found, because truth is one, and every human heart responds, in its best moments, to the truth.

II

THE SON OF MAN

I

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

In these latter days theology has fallen upon disrepute, and men take pride in the possession of a creed which may be engrossed in red and gold on a bit of cardboard to be hung over their beds.

The probability is, however, that in such crisp confessions certain of the articles are missing. A man's creed, his actual working creed, must contain his philosophy of the universe, including, for example, his politics, his business code, his definition of success, his opinions on war and music and socialism and baseball and churches and spelling-reform and monogamy. In the reasons he gives himself for the make-up of his ballot you might find a few of the missing articles; in the letter he writes to his salesman a few more, and a few more still in the thoughts with which he con-

templates a trip to the seashore or to Europe, in the phrases with which he greets his children on coming home of an evening, in the prayer which he breathes in one of life's emergencies. I doubt if in any case it may be compressed within the limits of a pretty motto.

The suggestion is frequently made that the hope for church union lies, not in the adoption of a common creed, but in the recognition of a common purpose. The difficulty is, of course, that it is our creed—our veritable and real creed, not the phrases we learn by heart in church—which determines our purposes. If men are at variance politically, who would think of proposing that they should give up the attempt to agree in principles and be content to unite on a common platform? The suggestion nevertheless has this merit, that if we should learn to think less of creeds and more of purposes we might discover what our real creeds are—an enterprise in which heretofore we have not been signally successful—and might find that they contain fewer conflicts than we had supposed.

Our theology, moreover, if it is to be

true, may not be simpler than life, and life is not conspicuously simple; on the contrary, it is quite overwhelmingly complex. The real weakness of old theologies was not in their overelaboration, it was precisely in their logical simplicity. The theologians whose "systems" are still embodied in our standard creeds and confessions, all lived before the time of Bacon and Descartes, in a day when the processes of logic were honored, even in the sciences, above any careful research in field and laboratory.

Logic has a way of moulding its symmetrical forms while the stuff of life slips from under its hands and spreads away formless, unmindful of the potter's art. This lesson the physicist and biologist learned long ago, the psychologist has been learning it of more recent years, and if the theologian has been slower than others in learning, the lesson is still his to learn, soon or late.

The change of method must, in the nature of the case, involve confusion. One newly discovered fact in the realm of physics is enough to throw all our physical theories into chaos; very foundations have

given way under the antics of radium. When the theologian in turn leaves his study to go out on a deliberate search for facts in the world of the spirit, it need be no occasion for surprise if now and then he comes upon an item which hitherto had escaped him; and certainly, when the discovery is made, it need be no occasion for surprise if he finds that his former theories need a considerable readjustment.

Nor need we expect that he will be ready with his readjustment on the instant. A child may have his blocks all nicely arranged, but hand him a new block and bid him fit that into his structure; the process may entail a good deal of tearing down, and you will not blame him if the first result of his efforts is disorder.

In the great game we play with truth new blocks are forever forthcoming. It is no child's puzzle, done up neatly in a hardwood box, to be worked over diligently, but at last, once for all, to be solved. It is characterized by the baffling quality of infinity. The truth about so fragmentary a thing as a drop of water is infinite; or, if it has borders, they are far beyond any of our comprehension.

We shall surely be unsafe in assuming that the facts are all known regarding human souls and their relation to the universe and its God. That old theologians were logically consistent meant only that the facts then at hand, or so many of them as happened to be chosen for attention, were symmetrically arranged. If the arrangement had been less symmetrical, less of the nature of a closed system with no place for further facts, it would not have been to the theologians' discredit; on the contrary, an occasional paradox might have been accepted as a very hall-mark of genuineness. That the average preacher of to-day is less ready with his answer to a "hard question," is by no means necessarily an evidence of the degeneracy of the age.

The man who thinks of religion as the ingenious invention of the theologians themselves, rather than as a thing of life and reality, will naturally continue to prefer a theological structure which is symmetrical and complete; while they are about it, is the idea, they might as well turn out a finished product. Here cynical folk, like the editors of metropolitan dailies, join

hands with the multitudes who still hold by the traditions of the anointed priesthood.

But the man who sees in theology the effort of a poor human intelligence to deal with the very materials of life, and of life in its highest forms, realizes that we are in a different world from that of the mathematician. If we were to write out the story of each of our days with all their arduous labors, at the end of how few of the pages should we have the confidence to set down Euclid's boast, *quod erat faciendum*—which was to be done! And with all our attempts at the solution of life's problems it has not, I think, been the wisest men who have been readiest to write at the last chapter's end, *quod erat demonstrandum*—which was to be proved.

For all of which it will not do to forget, even in passing, that life itself, in its unassuming, matter-of-fact way, brings its own certitudes. While the scientists are groping hesitantly toward the secret of the seed's growth, the farmer goes on sowing his grain and gathering his harvests. While the theologians are speculating about

the relation between God and the human soul, Christian experience testifies confidently: "I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day."[1]

[1] II Timothy 1 : 12.

II

THE HEART OF THE CREED

"WHAT must I do to be saved?"[1] cried the Philippian jailer, and at once the answer came, with firm assurance: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

But what if the jailer had never before heard of Christ? When a man lives in a prison, great events may betide in the world without his knowledge. "Believe on Christ!" we may imagine his astonished exclamation: "Who is Christ, and what has he to do with me, and in what fashion am I to believe on him?" It was not necessary for him to suggest the question, for the disciples must have realized the inadequacy of their reply. We read on, significantly, that "they spake unto him the word of the Lord." That first, brief injunction was merely the pregnant introduction to their real answer.

The whole Bible is commentary on the

[1] Acts 16 : 30.

meaning of this apparently simple formula. And even the Bible is not a complete commentary. Practical implications are involved in it which from day to day men have to discover for themselves. A half-century since conscientious men were still at odds over its bearing on the question of slavery; that a man believed on Christ, did it mean merely that he should deal with his slaves kindly, or that he should set his own slaves free, or that he should join in a crusade to abolish the whole institution of slavery from the earth? The Bible did not speak so clearly on the subject but that it left room for much honest and bitter difference of opinion. It was only a couple of generations ago that a distinguished Brooklyn clergyman preached a sermon on the text, "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate"; and the sons of Belial from whom the faithful Brooklynites were bidden to hold themselves aloof were none other than the abolitionists.

All our creed, and confessions, our theologies, our treatises on Christian ethics, are but expansions of the disciples' concise formula. Happily, however, it is not nec-

essary that a man should master libraries in order to share in the benefits of Christian discipleship. After one evening's instruction, we are told, the Philippian jailer was baptized and rejoiced.

It would be exceedingly interesting to know precisely of what this instruction consisted. We are not told in the narrative, but it is not difficult to surmise with a close approximation to certainty.

The New Testament begins with a fourfold story of Christ's life, and no doubt the answer of Paul and Silas to the jailer's question began with, and in the main consisted of, a recital of the most significant events in this same life story. It was quite inevitable that when the disciples went out to preach their new gospel their first effort should have been to give men a knowledge of Christ, what he said, what he did, how he died, and how he rose again from the dead. Only after such a recital could there have been any point in their demand that men should believe on him.

And when the story was told there was still no pressing need for explanations. After the recital I do not imagine that

the disciples were ever confronted, at the outset, with the further question which seems logically necessary: "But what do you mean by believing on him?" For the story comes to every man as a challenge and an invitation; it makes a certain definite and immediate appeal to the human heart, as unmistakable as the appeal of the sunrise. And the natural, spontaneous response to this appeal is what the disciples meant by belief, or faith.

The human mind, however, is never entirely unsophisticated; it insists at once on rationalizing its intuitions. No doubt, there were very excellent Christians before there was anything of a formulated Christian theology. Very excellent Christians are produced to-day—in some of the missions, for example—entirely apart from the intellectual atmosphere of the schools. And because of this certain men would abolish theology altogether; they would have us believe that Paul was much to be blamed for introducing it into the Church. But Paul was no confirmed dogmatist, cumbering his disciples with a mass of doctrine in regard to matters about

which they had not otherwise inquired. They had already inquired, and in many instances had received false answers, which were reflected in loose living. A man cannot forever continue to think crookedly and live straight.

In the very earliest days we find the young Christians analyzing the leap of faith which they had hazarded, with results that were anything but successful. They interpreted faith as a mere cold acceptance of certain external facts of Christian teaching, and one after another we find the apostles combating this shallow, but apparently prevalent, conception. There was desperate need of combating it, for the young converts were content to *live* as if faith were nothing more than this. And it would not serve now to recall them to the early intuitive response of their hearts to the story of Christ's life. Nothing would serve but that their false definition should be replaced by a definition that was adequate and true.

Paul's great theological passages invariably issue in practical injunctions to godliness, and so all vital theology has found its principal motive in the desire to

prevent the divorce of religion from conduct. Various expedients have been devised by way of abolishing this most inveterate and calamitous of divorce evils. One of our historic confessions discovers the bond of union in gratitude: If Christ saves us on the mere ground of our faith in him, it is argued, then ought we out of common thankfulness to live such lives as he would desire of us.[1] But though there is no Christian who fails to recognize every day of his life this compulsion of gratitude, we yet realize nowadays that this does not go to the root of the matter. More profound was another historic solution: that if any man turns to Christ in faith he is in some miraculous manner filled with a new spirit of righteousness.[2] A proper understanding of Christian teaching reveals the bond as yet more vital. Religion and conduct, faith and good works are seen to be no longer separable, *the twain become in reality one flesh.*

[1] *Heidelberg Catechism*, Question 86.
[2] *Westminster Confession*, chap. XIII.

III

CREED AND CONDUCT

FAITH is the key-word of Christianity, but likewise is it the key-word of all human life. That which a man believes determines his character, determines of necessity all that he does, all that he is.

Here, for example, is a man who believes exclusively in the value of money. He asks for nothing else, desires nothing else, in nothing else recognizes either pleasure or profit; his only satisfaction is in the thought of the money he has gained, and his only hope is in the prospect of gaining more. Offer him a possession of different sort, a beautiful house, the love of a child, the respect of his neighbors, the pride of work well done, any of the things that stir the sentiments of other men, and he will have none of them. In these he has no faith, he sees in them no value, for him; he *has* faith in money, and in money alone.

Knowing so much about your man, you know all that is to be known. In the

knowledge of his faith are laid bare his character, his career, and his destiny. He is a miser; he will spend his life grubbing for gold; and at last, if he have soul enough left to make the Great Transit, he will be lost, as how could he but be with his sole occupation gone and his sole passion left objectless?

Every voluntary action of a man's life is performed with the deliberate intention of securing some good, for himself or another. If he had no faith in anything he would sit dormant on a log until he starved to death. Herein, in fact, lies the secret of most of the apathy and indolence which we find among men. All their lives they have never had a taste of anything really wholesome and appetizing. They have been so poor perhaps that they have known nothing except squalor and drudgery, or they have been so rich that they have known nothing except frivolous pleasures. And it makes little difference which; in one case they become stolid and sottish, in the other they become blasé and bored. In neither case is there any zest in living, because they know nothing they can have that is worth having; worth fighting for,

worth working for. They lack faith in the values of life.

At the centre of the kingdom of every man's mind is set up a throne, and on the throne sits a king, being the Thing-in-which-he-believes. If his homage is half-hearted his life will be inert, but if his homage is genuine he will live vigorously. And the manner of his life will depend, absolutely, on the character of that sovereign seated, invisible but majestical, on the throne of his mind.

He who believes primarily in the material is a materialist; in pleasure, a Sybarite; in duty, a Puritan; in the development of his own character, a prig. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."[1]

The reader may protest that we all know better than we do; which may be true in a sense, or it may be merely a little phrase that we learned in Sunday-school, as Job says.[2] We do indeed play false oftentimes to our convictions, and I shall have more to say later in regard to these inconsistencies, but we do not plunge off to right or left inconsequently,

[1] Matthew 6 : 21. [2] Job 12 : 2.

like a horse with blind staggers. Whatever path we take, we take it because at the end of it, or along the road, we see the promise of a reward which seems to us at the time most worth going after. When we refuse a particular course of action, we refuse it because the gain that it offers does not seem to us worth the price of the effort and renunciation which it involves.

This does not mean that we choose our course in life after painstaking calculation, deciding at last that the course on which we determine offers the highest satisfactions. On the contrary, we commonly calculate very little, we do not stop to think, and our judgments are mostly of the surface. But, wise or foolish, superficial or profound, they are the only judgments we make, and in general we invest our lives in those enterprises which promise the most desirable returns.

While the man who spends his evening in drunken dissipation may have a haunting notion at the back of his head that he is a fool, nevertheless any alternative which suggests itself to him seems tame and uninteresting in comparison with the

excitements of the bar. Up to the point where disease paralyzes the will, up to the point, that is, of irresponsibility, of insanity, he chooses the saloon because he believes in it.

In a little book of the memoirs of H. Page, published by the American Tract Society about seventy-five years ago and full of the peculiar piety of that remote age, occurs this extract from a letter: "Last Sabbath morning heard Rev. Mr. D., from 'Let me die the death of the righteous,' etc. His object was to prove that the impenitent sinners do not really wish the pure joys and employments of heaven, which he did most clearly." The writer does not tell us if this was offered as a consolation to the sinners or, otherwise, just what was the purpose of the demonstration, but it is not difficult to believe that the preacher succeeded in proving his case. And he might still have proven it though the promised employments had been less exclusively musical than in the heaven of 1838. The joys of a Puritan preacher could not be expected to appeal at once to the revellers at the inn, for their idea of a "good time" was

entirely different from his. The life they were living was sufficient evidence of where to their mind the most alluring satisfactions were to be found.

It is always entertaining to catch a man outside his busy hours and discuss "religion" with him. One finds that men do a good deal more thinking on such subjects as the word suggests than we commonly give them credit for. The day's work done, they may find a subtle pleasure in pondering the great questions of the soul, the Supreme Being and the future life. The week's work done, they may enjoy a church service with its fragrant atmosphere and its outlook on large, far prospects.

But our real religion is not what we think as we nestle by the evening lamp for an hour's discussion, nor what we feel as the music of the anthem pours over our souls of a Sunday morning. Our religion begins with that of which we have just been speaking, with our conception of the meaning of life and life's values; the things we are living for, what we wish to get out of life, what we wish to get done in life; with the question not

so much of how we are resolved to make our way, whether honestly or dishonestly, generously or ruthlessly, but of where we wish to arrive.

It is true that people do not ordinarily imagine that this is the province of religion. They have an idea that religion is a sort of umpire standing over the game insisting that it be played fair. On the contrary, it is little bothered about how the game is played; it assumes the right to a preliminary word as to what the game shall be.

In his memorable lecture before the Bradford Board of Trade, John Ruskin said:

> You know that we are talking about the real, active, continual, national worship; that by which men act while they live; not that which they talk of when they die. Now, we have, indeed, a nominal religion, to which we pay tithes of property, and sevenths of time; but we have also a practical and earnest religion, to which we devote nine-tenths of our property, and six-sevenths of our time. And we dispute a great deal about the nominal religion; but we are all unanimous about this practical one, of which I think you will admit that the ruling goddess may be best generally described as the Goddess of "Getting-on." [1]

[1] *The Crown of Wild Olives:* "Traffic."

And at the end of the lecture, after quoting some of Plato's words about the idol of riches, he looked into the faces of those respectable, honest, churchgoing British merchants and charged: "This idol is yours."

It is not impossible that this idol is ours, too, ours when we do not in the least suspect that we are idolaters. And the danger is not peculiar to the very rich; they are too few to occupy much of our attention, and in any case I am not sure that they are the chief blasphemers at this shrine—more than most others they have had opportunity to learn that the shrine is a sham. But there are millions of others who worship afar, who see at a distance the golden flame and imagine that it is sacred fire with the magic of happiness in its burning; young men and young women whose dream is to "get on"; older men and women whose pride is that they have got on so well, or whose disappointment and shame is that they have got on no better.

The world is gradually doing away with its established state churches, but we still have our abundantly well-established state

religions. In seeking them it will serve little purpose to investigate the cathedrals and the theological seminaries; rather must one walk the streets, enter the homes, shops, factories, playhouses, legislatures, and, by observing how men live, discover what it is in which they really believe.

IV

LIFE'S COMPLEXITIES

If it requires a prophet to reveal a new religion, scarcely less does it require a prophet to discover an old one. No inquiry is more difficult than the attempt to penetrate the motives by which men live. In the preceding paragraph, for example, I did not mean anything so crude, and comforting, as to suggest that men are commonly engrossed in mere money-making; such an indictment would let us all out, for there are many things about which we care besides cold cash and its material products.

But the mere fact that you love your wife, or that you are interested in old prints or golf or Foreign Missions, does not of itself absolve you from the charge of mammon-worship. The outright miser, such as I have lately described, is a pure figment of the imagination, as utterly mythical as the unicorn. The world has

known, and knows to-day, many miserly men, but never a man whose character was exhausted in miserliness. The dramatist could not portray such a man, for the picture would be so monstrous as to lose its human resemblance. Shylock passes for a miser; on the discovery of his daughter's flight he could exclaim: "A diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort." But occasion came when he exclaimed, even more passionately:

> "If every ducat in six thousand ducats
> Were in six parts and every part a ducat,
> I would not have them; I would have my bond."

The conflicting passion saves the portrait to humanity; without it our Shylock would not be even the caricature of a man.

Our ruling faith is never easily described. Like the princes of any reigning house, it is the proud possessor of a fine array of names, upon some one of which men will fasten for the sake of convenience, but no single word is ever fully expressive of a man's character.

And if human character as we actually

find it baffles us with its complexities, we become not less involved in complexities when we set out to describe character as it ought to be. Moralists condemn the love of riches and the craving for pleasure, but they surely do not mean that riches and pleasure have no real value and are not, within measure, proper objects of pursuit. The danger is that we shall set too much value on them; but how much is permissible? Who would ever hope to assess the various goods of life and to indicate precisely, or even approximately, the emphasis which should be placed on each? To what extent should a man be willing to subordinate wealth to charity, with the monks; or pleasure to piety, with the ascetics; or life to knowledge, with Browning's Grammarian? How far should we sacrifice the welfare of our family to the interests of the nation, our own comfort to the comfort of the beggar at our door?

These questions, with the whole array of questions which they suggest, are not to be answered satisfactorily in the abstract. But in the concrete, fortunately, they prove less difficult. We manage to

recognize virtue when we see it, as Antony recognized Brutus:

> "the elements
> So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, 'This was a man!' "

Christianity does not undertake the hopeless task of tabulating the multitudinous goods of life in such fashion as will be valid for all men at all times; it points you to a Man. There, we say, is the perfect life of humanity. Learn to value things as he valued them; count it success when you achieve what he achieved, when you win what he won, when you become the man that he showed himself to be. And the true order of human values becomes intelligible to a child when it is thus embodied in a personality.

Faith in Christ is nothing unless it begin with such a recognition of him as the only true and adequate revelation of human life, with the vision of him not only as supreme beauty but as the *light of the world.* But those who do thus believe in him, accepting the valuations disclosed in his life, and sharing the faith that was in him, will find themselves at once not only Chris-

tian but Christlike, actuated by the motives which actuated him, his character becoming reincarnate in them. Christian faith does not so much *produce* Christian character; of itself it *is* Christian character.

V

FAITH AND CONVERSION

The faith which determines a Christian character, however, must be sharply distinguished from a mere amiable admiration of Christian virtues.

To a certain degree, it is true, the adage holds good that "we become like that which we admire." The man who admires truthfulness, for example, will be truthful. If it is objected that every one admires truthfulness, the retort is obvious, that every one *is* truthful—up to the point where truthfulness interferes with the acquisition of some advantage on which he sets a still higher value.

But it cannot be shown with the same simplicity that the man who admires generosity will at once be gifted with a generous soul. Paul tells us that he despised covetousness and fully recognized the wrong of it, but his stanchest resolutions were futile; he continued to do the thing he desired not to do; he was covetous in spite of

himself. And the reason is entirely plain: that generosity toward one's neighbor is not born of a love of generosity, it is born only of a love of one's neighbor. The heroism by which a man risks drowning to rescue a comrade does not spring from a desire to be a hero but from a desire to save his comrade's life.

Character indeed depends comparatively little on what a man wishes to be; almost entirely it depends on what he wishes to do, what he wishes to get and to give.

> "For what is this
> Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins?
> Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
> As Galahad." [1]

Napoleon was fond of paying tribute to the beauty and power of Christ's life, and we have no reason to suppose that his eulogies were not sincere. But Napoleon did not believe in Christ. Out in the wilderness of the temptation he would not have chosen as Christ chose; in the wilderness of his own life's decision he did not, in fact, choose as Christ had chosen.

[1] *The Holy Grail,* Tennyson.

He preferred the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them.

We accept the Pharisees as our arch-hypocrites, but there is one lowest depth of hypocrisy which the Pharisees never fathomed. In their rejection of Christ they were entirely frank. Much of what he said and symbolized was dark to them, but they sensed the meaning of his life clearly enough to know that to recognize him would imply a revolution in their whole attitude toward God and the world; in their religious system—Sabbath, sacrifice, ceremonial, and the rest; in their political ambitions, aflame since time immemorial with the hope of world-conquest; in their social organization, now comfortably adjusted for the benefit of the people on top. And the irrational expedient of acknowledging Jesus as the Christ, while still clinging to their old philosophy of life, apparently did not suggest itself to them. They did not hail him as divine while they scouted his ideas as impracticable, nor did they call him the Lord of heaven while they murmured secretly that he was sadly lacking in his knowledge of business and politics. "Blind guides"

they may have been, but they were not too blind to see that the acceptance of him implied the remoulding of their lives in accordance with the revelation of his life, and they were not such utter hypocrites that they ever sought to evade the implication.

In his commanding presence I doubt not that the issue was too plain for any man to think of evading it, and if in later years we have stooped to hypocrisies of which the Pharisees themselves were incapable, the reason, I am glad to believe, lies not in our deeper depravity but in this rather, that we have lost sight of the man Jesus behind the clouds of our speculations and superstitions.

Really to see Christ, is to see all life anew, and the acceptance of a new view of life involves a transformation of character. "We all," said Paul, "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory."[1]

Such sudden changes of character as are here implied have been the object of no small amount of ridicule. "Con-

[1] II Corinthians 3 : 18.

version," says Leslie Stephens, "appears to me to be an absurdity";[1] which is precisely the way I feel about chameleons —"Impossible!—only I saw it"; it is the way the king of Siam felt about ice. But in face of the facts one would do well to convince us that there are any changes of character which do not partake somewhat of the cataclysmic. "The soul's advances," Emerson wrote, "are not made by gradation, such as can be represented by motion in a straight line; but rather by ascension of state, such as can be represented by metamorphosis—from the egg to the worm, from the worm to the fly."[2] And his word, metamorphosis, significantly, is the noun form of the identical verb used by Paul in the passage just quoted. "We are *metamorphosed*," said Paul, "into the same image."

In the opening chapter of *My Religion*, Tolstoy gives us the following account of his own conversion:

> Five years ago I came to believe in Christ's teaching, and my life suddenly became changed: I ceased desiring what I had wished before, and

[1] *An Agnostic's Apology*, p. 363.
[2] *The Over-Soul.*

began to desire what I had not wished before. What formerly had seemed good to me appeared bad, and what had seemed bad, appeared good. . . . The direction of my life, my desires became different: what was good and bad changed places. All this was due to the fact that I came to understand Christ's teaching differently from what I had understood it before.

This was a veritable and normal Christian experience. And we may say this without insisting that in every man the changes will be as dramatic and as easily described as with Tolstoy, for most of us do not begin as "nihilists."[1] And we may say it, moreover, without insisting that Tolstoy's understanding of Christ and his teaching was then or ever complete. Enough that his new understanding was truer and fuller than the old, and the miracle happened.

[1] *My Religion*, p. 1.

VI

THE TRAVAIL OF REBIRTH

TRANSFORMATION of character, however, as sudden and miraculous as it may be, is not easy; it is always hard. It implies in the first place the acquisition of a new idea, than which nothing is more difficult for our stubborn brains.

Governments used to be cast into a frenzy of fear at the mention of free speech and a free press, accepting the familiar heresy of the fickleness of the mob, and imagining that if any mad fellow should begin to preach strange doctrines the multitudes would flock after him like sheep at the heels of the bell-wether, until in six months the nation would be abandoned to atheism and anarchy. But the desperate experiment has been foisted upon us and the multitudes have not yet run wild; they are at least no more revolutionary to-day than in the days of Wat Tyler and John Ball, when no man breathed his new creed under cover of darkness to a little

group in the corner of a field without the terror of the gallows before his eyes. Men sadly underestimated the resistant powers of the human mind when they imagined that it would at once respond to the sorcery of fiery words, whether false or true.

Look at the progress of the Reformation, or the development of the principles of political democracy. Generation after generation great men arose, thundering the truth from the housetops in their effort to save men from the tyranny of priests and kings; and the priests and the kings took them, and tortured them, and burned them at the stake, and the multitudes thundered applause. The people devoutly believed that they were made to be tyrannized over, and no eloquence on earth could persuade them to forfeit their subjection.

Christ wished to give the world a new idea. We speak of his gentleness, and sometimes he *was* gentle; nothing could surpass the tenderness with which he dealt with criminals. But when he came to deal with respectable citizens who were inclined to take satisfaction in the thought

that they were not criminals, who flattered themselves because they did not lie or steal or kill, and kept the Sabbath and went to church and provided for their families, then his language burned like lava.

He challenged their supersacred Scriptures with his daring "But I say unto you," trampling on the things they held holiest in the world—their elaborately phrased prayers, their carefully regulated Sabbath, their very home relationships; and worse than this he challenged their ordinary intelligence, flinging his epigrams in the face of their precious experience and their business sagacity.

"Be not anxious for the morrow, what ye shall eat," and did not every one know, then as now, the inevitable end of the spendthrift and the improvident! "Give to him that asketh thee," and how long would it be before they should all be reduced to beggary! "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," and so every honest man would fall prey to the murderous bandits of the highroad.

It is not difficult to imagine the state

of mind of scholarly Pharisees at the close of such an address. They must have felt that they had been listening to a man of irresponsible speech who would have turned their well-ordered world into chaos.

Such puzzling as this was perhaps in the mind of Nicodemus when he came to Christ by night. "We know that thou art a teacher sent from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him";[1] but these extravagances, these floutings of our Scripture and our intelligence! What was it last?—"If any man hate not his father and mother and wife and children, he cannot be my disciple."[2] Now what are we to make of such insanity and impiety as this? And Christ answered the unspoken question: "Ye must be born again," from the beginning ye must be made over, reconstruct the very presuppositions of your thinking and turn your moralities inside out.

Despite the flippant assumptions of our popular-magazine theologians, Christ could not have meant that his maxims should be taken literally. "Be not therefore anx-

[1] John 3 : 2. [2] Luke 14 : 26.

ious for the morrow," but every one knows that we may not be too frivolous in our thought of the future; that if the farmer should fail to provide for the winter season he would not live through till the next harvest. It is the wisdom in us, not the folly, that bids us save, and the saving habit makes civilization possible; but also it may very easily make civilization not worth the having when we have got it. There is no insurance policy which will cover all the risks of the future, and which a man may buy at any price less than the price of his soul.

"If any man hate not his father and mother and wife and children," I need not say that if any man did hate them he would be worse than the pagan, but how many men and women lose their souls in the narrowness of engrossing family affections, priding themselves on their devotion while they are doing all in their power to compass the ruin both of themselves and of those they love!

Christ spoke in strong, unguarded language, but he had to speak strongly, for he had to stir men's minds to the depths of their most pious and commonplace as-

sumptions. He had to revise the ancient truisms of their morality and to upset the undebatable maxims of their common sense.

In brief he had to change their religion, the most difficult of all tasks, for it means working in a material less malleable than granite, and not likely to yield at all to your moulding process except in the heat of tremendous emotions. A scholarly essay on Christian ethics never yet recreated a human soul. If one is to make an impression on the inner nature of a man, there is needed a furnace of blazing passion, and blazing passions are not wont to be nice in logical discriminations; they leave the necessary modifications to take care of themselves.

It is as well, no doubt, and better, that the mind is not too easily impressed. It required eighteen hundred years of Christian teaching for men to draw the apparently obvious inference that slavery is wrong; but, the inference at last drawn, we have the substantial consolation of knowing that it would require another eighteen hundred years to convince us to the contrary. Were it not for our stub-

born conservatism the moral battles would scarcely be worth fighting; their fruits would not last overnight.

Blessed be the great, pervasive, infinitely patient, infinitely wearisome power of inertia, whether it appear in the repose of pyramids, in the rush of planets, or in habits of act and thought. It is the thing that keeps most of us going most of the time and that holds us from going wrong. But woe to matter or man wherein are no more heroic forces playing their disconcerting surprises, taking the dull-lived materials of dust and mind and exploding them into roses and larks and lyrics and revolutions; into wrestlings with Satan in the wilderness, Sermons on the Mount, and heart-breaking tragedies on the cross!

VII

FAITH'S LAPSES

As we appreciate what faith really is we begin to find the reason for that sense of enfranchisement and harmony of soul which has typically characterized the Christian experience.

As long as we get no further than to recognize Christ's principles as morally imperative, seeing him as the mere personification of a purified Mosaic code, so long shall we find in him no freedom but only a more galling sense of restraint. Even if we realize that the shackles are for our good, we shall still feel ourselves shackled, hampered—to some degree handicapped in our pursuit of that which is our real goal in life.

But when we see in Christ the only goal that is worth striving for, when the path that he blazed for us becomes the path of all delight and desire, leading at last to the delectable mountains of our own heart's satisfaction, the rigor of the law relaxes;

that which before we did out of respect for the requirements of an external commandment, we now do out of the gladness of our own untrammelled choice. We feel, properly, that we have passed out from under the reign of law altogether, and have entered into a new kingdom of which the only law is liberty.

> "Duty's a slave that keeps the keys,
> But Love, the master, goes in and out
> Of his goodly chambers with song and shout,
> Just as he please—just as he please." [1]

This, I grant, is an account of the Christian experience which is accurately true only of our most exalted moods, for the sorry fact presses on our attention that Christ's followers, even the best of them, are not delivered from all desires that conflict with the principles of his life. Very far do they fall short of any true reincarnation of his character. But it is only fair to observe that the failure of faith to produce its perfect fruit is by no means peculiar to the experience of the Christian.

The first complexity of character, as

[1] Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, *Plighted.*

we have noted, lies in the multiplicity of goods to which we all attach more or less value, but there is an added complexity: our scale of values is not only almost infinitely difficult to determine at any particular moment, it is also almost infinitely variable, from day to day, from hour to hour.

By no chance is the royal sovereignty in this kingdom of the mind ever so firmly established but that the land is full of rival claimants for the throne. No South American republic has presented so tumultuous a succession of revolutions as does the individual history of every man. We are all in the throes of never-ending revolutionary struggles, and it is an unusually stable government in the politics of the soul which sees any twenty-four hours pass without several changes of dynasty.

Watch your Shylock for a few evenings on his way home from business and you will see strange sights. Here he is, spending an extra dime for a particularly appetizing cake at the baker's, and here dropping one of his precious pennies into a blind man's basket. Afterward he may repent of his extravagance or his generosity,

but as sure as he is a man you will find him occasionally *out of character*. At the instant when he squanders his substance on the baker's tempting morsel he is an epicure, and when he drops his penny into the blind man's basket, for the fraction of a second at least and to the measure of a penny's worth, he is a Good Samaritan. Were he in his hovel alone and a mere impulse of generosity were to sweep over him, a loathing for the sordid stuff counted out on the table before him and the thrill of a desire to use his gold to some noble purpose, for such time as the impulse lasted he would be in fact no miser but a philanthropist.

> "The thing we long for, that we are
> For one transcendent moment."[1]

Browning's whimsical counsel in *A Soul's Tragedy* would have us carry the philosophy still further:

> Ever judge men by their professions! For though the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust

[1] Lowell, *Longing*.

it and know the man by it, I say—not by his performance; which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must with its accidents and circumstances; the profession was purely the man's own.

These transcendent moments of extravagant goodness are entirely real and not to be lightly reckoned, evidence as they are at least of something within us better than that which we ordinarily exhibit to the world. Nevertheless, in simple fact, we refuse to know men by them, nor do we know men by their fits of sudden depravity. Rather by their calmer and more deliberate purposes we judge men. When a good man yields to a passing weakness, knowing that he will be sorry for it afterward we readily forgive him. And when a consistently selfish man surprises us by an occasional act of generosity we hesitate to change our opinion of him too quickly, for he, too, may be sorry for it afterward. Indeed, his ardor may cool enough between the first impulse and the execution of the act so that the gift shrinks while his hand is in his pocket, his actual contribution being but a fraction of what he originally intended, and as he walks on,

if he is really confirmed in his selfishness, he will berate himself for having yielded to a foolish sentiment.

Not by his momentary impulses but by his dominant faith we judge a man, for good or evil. And this dominant faith we determine, in part by the general tenor of his life, in part by the reflections with which he afterward views his acts. If he be genuinely sorry for anything he has done we are ready with our forgiveness if the act was bad, and we must modify our approbation if the act was good. In one case as in the other we know that it did not represent *the man.*

Those of us who accept Christ's revelation of life have our moments of weakness, like others, sudden impulses in which for the instant our scheme of values is turned upside down; we also act "out of character" on occasion. Only too well indeed we know how the moments of weakness lengthen, how true faith comes but in flashes; how dimly, even in our best moments, we glimpse the vision of him through the mists of our passions and prejudices. But enough we discern to beckon us ever forward, so that, not counting ourselves

to have apprehended, but forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, in the hope of a day when we shall awake to find ourselves like him, for we shall see him even as he is.

I do not mean that all inconsistencies in the lives of Christians are so comfortably to be apologized for. Many of them are due to a secret, fixed conviction that there are real values quite outside the range of Christ's revelation, not rigorously in keeping with his principles and yet not lightly to be given up; which, of course, is not faith at all. In case of failure we have a right to look for that regret which inevitably accompanies the frustration of a serious purpose, for that penitence which is likewise inevitable when a man knows that the failure was due to his own fault. But given this genuine faith, marked most conspicuously by penitence in case of failure, we are accustomed to accept a man in the light of it.

If that man's ruling ambition is to heap up gold coins, if he subserves every other

desire to this paramount desire, regretting every action impelled by a conflicting motive, we say that the real man is the miser. And if this man's sincere desire is to live the life that Christ lived, in like fashion we judge him, not by the vacillations of his actual life, but by the purposes on which he is seriously resolved. The real man for our appraisement is not the man we see, in his continual yielding to unchristian impulses, it is rather another man whom we never see, but half discern and half infer, behind the overt acts and beneath the transient impulses—the man he desires to be; his consciously and resolutely chosen, unattained and mayhap unattainable ideal.

Old theologians used to speak, to the scandal of some of our modern moralists, of the "imputation" of Christ's righteousness to the believer. And when the moralist asks how eternal justice can accept a man, not for what he is, but for what some one else is, the question seems to answer itself; but, as occasionally happens, the obvious answer is wrong. Whether eternal justice may make such a transposition depends altogether on the relation

between the man and this "some one else." In our friend's penitence for his fault we say that he has "come to himself," and we do not feel that we are violating any code of justice in accepting him at the worth of his calm and deliberate purposes. If then a man's ruling faith be in Christ, his deliberate purpose to live the life that Christ lived, it is no more than a part of habit to accept him at the worth of that faith, of that purpose; to take him, not for what he is, but for what Christ is. On the ground of his faith in Christ we count the righteousness of Christ as his righteousness.

VIII

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

MEN frequently disparage attempts to "reduce" Christ to a "mere example"; and it is true that the meaning of his life is by no means exhausted in this office. But it is still the silliest of uncomprehending folly to speak as if this phase of his ministry were relatively unimportant and inglorious. Are examples then so common? Where else in the world, or in the history of the race, do we find any life-picture to which we dare, without reservation, point the rising generation?

We do homage to the masterpiece of marble in which a great sculptor has fashioned his ideal of the human form, and to the Madonna in which the painter has wrought on canvas his conception of true womanhood; we cherish the lines in which great poets and masters of prose have drawn imaginary portraits of heroic human character. To say of Jesus Christ that he is a veritable example for men, what is it

but to say that here is a masterpiece of God's workmanship, wherein he who carved the mountains and painted the sunsets and drew out the starlit scroll of the firmament, the infinite artist of the universe, has set forth his ideal of manhood; working, not in stone or colors or feeble words, but in the miracle-stuff of thinking mind, in that mysterious element beyond the reach of human hands, defying time, transcending space, a living soul? And all the genius of the earth, working not in substance but in dreams, has not been able to figure us another.

There stands Christ, his life deeds recorded, his picture painted. Look at him! Was he king of men, or no? Not that the Bible calls him perfect, that saints and heroes have united to do him honor, that teacher and preacher have held him before you as the pattern to be followed; for yourself, judge.

His innocence, and whether we see it in him or in the little child who plays on our knee; his heroism, and whether we see it in him or in the crusaders of any age; his self-forgetfulness in the enthusiasm of a great cause, whether we see it in him or

in Livingstone or Lincoln; his militant integrity, his passionate tenderness, his democratic dignity, his joyousness, his seriousness, his reverence—those various qualities which go to make up the Christ-man, are they the true qualities of manhood, or not? The principles which we find so plainly exemplified in his life, are they, or are they not, the valid, unimpeachable eternal laws of our own being?

To look at Christ is like looking at humanity through the rose-tinted glasses of all the fancies of the poets, of all the hopes and yearnings of the strongest men and noblest women; it is to see into our own hearts, in those hours when heaven seems nearest, with their struggles banished, their fleetingest golden dreams come true.

Christ was not merely the supremely good man, he was the supreme Man; it is only in finding him that we find ourselves.

In our acknowledgment of Christ as our divinely appointed example, humanity's archetype and ideal, deeper implications are involved than men generally recognize. "The ideal, after all," said Amiel, "is truer than the real; for the ideal

is the imperishable element in perishable things; it is their type, their sum, their *raison d'être*, their formula in the book of the Creator, and therefore at once the most exact and the most condensed expression of them." Or, in the language of Professor Palmer: "Ideals are merely realities filled out. They express realities which have been begun but which have been left half-finished. More real therefore are well-constructed ideals, though less actual, than the realities themselves; for they set forth in full significance that which reality has been unable to attain." [1]

The ideal is "truer than the real," "more real than the realities"; the words are worth pondering. For, if Christ be indeed the ideal of humanity, may we not believe that perfect wisdom sees in us all, underneath the cloak of our follies and sins, the perfect image of Christ—unformed, embryonic, distorted, but still there? Reason enough that God should cherish us! A thoughtless gratitude has sometimes said that God loves men, not for anything worthy that he finds in them, but for the mere reason that he is love; forgetting

[1] *The Problem of Freedom*, p. 125.

that this would be to make God a moral monster, for what is immorality but the love of the unlovely? Men credit the wife who clings to her husband in his downfall with the miracle of a devotion which finds nothing in its object to fasten on; but the wife knows better; beneath the rags she still has eyes to see the beauty which lies mysteriously concealed. And so must God be able to see in every man the promise of better things, of the best things, however blind and ready to condemn we men may be.

For there is no man in whom this Christ-ideal is not struggling for realization, tragically free though we are to disown it if we will; there is no man indeed, even of those who have disowned it, in whom it is not in some part realized, who in some of his moods and relations does not betray his kinship with the Master-Soul. And if in other moods and relations we crush and suppress it, inevitably shall we be burdened, if not with such a sense of conflict as that which weighed on the sensitive soul of Paul, at least with a vague sense of longing and dissatisfaction. The feverish pursuit of excitement, in dissipation, frivolous pleasures, and the rest, that we find among

men is evidence of nothing else than that the soul is denied its proper life. No one of us can ever be content with the humdrum and the commonplace; we are all hungry for the infinite. The rich man is not satisfied with his riches, nor the drunkard with his drafts; feed ourselves as we will on the cheap sensations of wealth or stimulants, of games or travel or art, and the soul still cries for more.

Within us is a half-finished image, and the creative energies of the universe are pushing for its completion. Of a sudden we see Christ, and there is no mystery in the quick, spontaneous response of our nature. There, and there alone, we behold the promise of satisfaction, of self-realization. We have been with our souls as with a disconsolate child, begging and begging, clamorously, piteously, but in a language we did not understand; till now, in Christ's presence, the long mystery becomes plain. In him, for the first time, the true, full meaning of every human life is made known.

Faith in Christ means then, first, the acceptance of a new ideal, which is not

merely a new conception of character, but a new realization of the meaning and purpose of life, a new sense of life's values, a new definition of success; and this not merely one ideal, out of many, that we happen to choose for ourselves, but *the* ideal, for which we were evolved, which is nascent in the soul of every man, and only in the light of which all humanity becomes intelligible.

The sincerity with which we accept it is precisely measured by the penitence with which we look back on the deeds and endeavors of our former life under the dominance of other ideals. For Christ's call to men, that they should "repent and believe," implies no sequence of time; the two, faith and repentance, are as simultaneous as the shaft of light and the shadow which it casts. A man cannot begin to feel sorrow for his sins, in distinction from a mere chagrin at the sins' penalties, until the sins are conquered; until in embracing a new ideal he has actually achieved a new manhood.

Therefore was Lincoln as true to life as he was true to Scripture when he said, in the course of a conversation reported by

Carpenter the painter: "When a man is sincerely *penitent* for his misdeeds, and gives satisfactory evidence of the same, he can safely be pardoned, and there is no exception to this rule."

III

THE SON OF GOD

I

THE ECCENTRICITIES OF DOUBT

As long as I speak of Christ as the revelation of human life, the pre-eminent, ideal, complete man, I seem to speak in platitudes, but when I turn to speak of him as the revelation of divine life, God in the flesh, I am likely to challenge scepticism. At last, men exclaim, we have entered upon the battle-ground. All the eulogiums that rhetoric can devise in praise of his humanity they are willing to grant; it is not here that the issue lies.

On the contrary, I am inclined to believe that it is here the real issue does lie. It is true that men generally recognize Christ's life to be higher and better than their own, admitting that they *ought* to live in accordance with his principles. But we are not concerned with oughts and laws, we are concerned with faith. And does our ob-

servation indicate, on the part of men in general, a calm and determined confidence in Christ's valuations? Or is the life of the multitudes mainly regulated by a trust in things on which he set a very low value or no value whatever? Christ's revelation of human life is a truism which is very commonly discredited.

But his revelation of divine life, toward which we assume such a learned air of incredulity, is one of the axioms of our thought. When men think of God to-day, they think of him ordinarily as they see him reflected in the face of Jesus of Nazareth.

The significance of our current theological conceptions is to be appreciated only in connection with the history of the past, and past conceptions are necessarily hard to reconstruct. But a casual study of our Old Testament documents will reveal startling glimpses of the crude notions of Deity entertained even among the ancient Hebrews. After David had been driven into exile from Saul's court, we are told that he stole into the royal camp by night and took from the king's side a spear and a cruse of water, after which he is reported

as saying to the king: "If it be the Lord that hath stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering. But if it be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord; for they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go serve other gods."[1] These men, Israelites, evidently supposed that in sending David beyond the bounds of Israel they were sending him beyond the sovereignty of Israel's God—a supposition which David apparently shared.

The idea may seem shocking to some of us that David should have failed to recognize the universality of God's rule, thinking of him as God of Israel alone, his dominion limited to the hills that banked the Jordan valley, bounded by the dominion of other gods outside. But we need not be shocked; it was Elijah, more than a century afterward, who first shook the land with the thunder of the declaration: "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God." And Elijah's name has lived down through the years for the very reason that in the discovery of this truth he was a pioneer, that through him Israel began to awaken

[1] I Samuel 26 : 19.

to the great lesson that one God reigns supreme in heaven and on earth and that the gods of the heathen are naught.

Or consider the other clause in David's address to the king: "If it be the Lord that hath stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering." Such was David's method of propitiation; no word of repentance or of any change of life; the smell of an offering was to transform the divine frown to a smile. It seems strange to find in the greatest of Israel's kings so utter a dependence on ritual and sacrifice, with such utter negligence of God's primary demand for right living. It seems strange until we remember the work of Amos and his immediate successors, whose contribution to the religious thought of the nation was in this very disclosure of God's *character*, his inherent righteousness and the consequent necessity, and sufficiency, of righteousness to secure his favor.

Not that the earlier prophets had omitted all mention of morality, but as we read the ancient codes we are constantly impressed by the meagre space given to moral laws in comparison with that given to the multiplied regulations of the ceremonial.

With the literary prophets the emphasis changes. "Wash you, make you clean," cries Isaiah, and the cleanness is no longer the ceremonial purity of priestly ablutions, but "put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed."[1]

The history of the people of Israel is the story of a nation groping after God, and the glory of that history lies in the manner in which, little by little, under the leadership of great men, light broke upon the darkness.

The history of other nations of antiquity differs in this, that for them the light did not break. The whole world was covered with temples and smoking altars and tribes of priests; soldiers refused to go into battle until the sacrifices had been offered; cattle were slaughtered by the thousand; men slashed themselves with cruel instruments and banished themselves from human society in a pitiable effort to secure an answer to their prayers; mothers laid their children on the altar and watched while the priest plunged a knife into the warm flesh—there is no doubt that men thought

[1] Isaiah 1 : 16 *f.*

of God, and felt their need of him, and were willing to pay for his help and favor. But what did they know of him?

A god in every spring and mountain, each envious of the other's power; a god that descended on the world at night to abet men in their crimes; that delighted in the smell of burning bullocks, demanding the blood of little children for his offerings; that spoke through the ravings of maniacs; that knew the future but did not know right from wrong; fitful, deceptive, vengeful, ruthless—it is all so far behind us that we can scarcely credit the fidelity of the picture; the world to-day has another thought of God.

And where did the world learn its lesson? We shall not forget the great sages of paganism and the inspired vision with which they caught splendid glimpses of the truth; but in simple fact the world did not see the light through their revelations. Especially we shall not forget the prophets of old Israel; but the world did not see the light through the eyes of Israel's prophets. These pioneers of the truth rose and fell; the torch which they lit flickered on, but it never shone far beyond the land where it was first kindled.

Most of their own countrymen even still groped in semidarkness, and at the close of the prophetic period the light rather waned than brightened. The masses in Israel came to think of God as a heavenly tyrant, not lacking in benevolence, but mainly interested in the workings of an intricate and meaningless code of petty laws.

Then, suddenly, came Christ! The Jews in the main disowned him, but the elaborate regulations of Pharisaism fell into decay. Greece and Rome received the first tidings of him with derision, but the gods of Greece and Rome became empty names. The story of his life swept over the earth and before it, like darkness before the dawn, old, distorted conceptions of deity faded and vanished. Thereafter men might reject all idea of God if they would, but if they wished a God at all their conception must be framed after this new image. From that day until now, when men have set out to describe God they have portrayed the character of Jesus Christ. "He that hath seen me," he said, "hath seen the Father."[1]

[1] John 14 : 9.

II

THE MADNESS OF ATHEISM

But, after all, it may be asked, why the theologizing? If we believe in Christ as the exponent of human life, accepting his assessment of life's values and endeavoring to follow him, what difference does it make whether we be theists or polytheists, or whether we abandon the thought of God altogether?

It really makes a considerable difference. We talk glibly of the values of life, but if there be no God, there are no values. No single part of the universe can have a meaning unless the whole has a meaning, for though life with its problems may transcend Euclid's axioms, it surely cannot contradict them.

Here are a thousand workmen—masons, carpenters, painters, sculptors, and hod-carriers—all busy plying the various instruments of their trades, a mass of materials piled up about them. "Why so energetic?" I inquire. "What are you doing?"

"Carving a stone," says one, "Planing a board," says another, and "Carrying bricks," answers a third. "But what is it all about? What are you all doing?" "Building," they answer. "And building what?" "Nothing." "You mean," I urge, "that the plans are secret." "We mean nothing of the kind," protest the workmen; "it is our deliberate belief that there are no plans, that there is no architect; the whole enterprise has no purpose of any sort; if ever the structure were to be completed it would be of no use; it is neither factory nor cathedral; we spend our lives building—nothing!"

Then I beg leave to remark that they are working too hard.

The problem as to whether or not life is worth living is not to be solved by a nice balancing of the pleasures of life against the pains—where are the scales for such a calculation? If human life in the large has a purpose, to the accomplishment of which we may contribute, each soul may conceivably find a meaning and a value in substantial service; but if the cosmos itself is aimless, then is the life of every individual left void and inane.

Instinctively men believe in the values of life as real—the child is ever an optimist. Instinctively, that is, they believe that the universe has a meaning and a purpose; they believe in God. The reason they are as ready as they sometimes are to dismiss God from their philosophy is that all the while they take him for granted in their life.

Such an inner contradiction, however, is not likely to endure permanently. An intuitive faith unsupported by conscious philosophy is much in the position of greenbacks with no gold in the treasury. They may pass current for a time, but soon or late the fraud is bound to be discovered, whereupon depreciation will quickly follow.

It is worth the world's while occasionally to take stock of its intellectual convictions.

Atheism would seem to me a plausible hypothesis but for one circumstance—that we have the universe on our hands. If it were not for the universe I can imagine that atheism might be widely prevalent; atheism, that is, in the sense of an absence of belief in God. And it is undoubtedly true, moreover, that the further our knowledge extends, the more incredible the

universe seems, with its incomprehensible distances and its equally incomprehensible littlenesses, its amazing metamorphoses, its organizations of suns and women's clubs and ants and ions and protoplasmic cells, its tangle of waves, in the air and the ether, which may be anything from a sunset or a sonata or a lightning-bolt to the draft-horses of a trolley-car or a planet. It is all monstrously unthinkable if you will, but it *is*. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"; well, at least, there flame the heavens and here swings the earth, we are sure of *them*. If we could doubt the reality of earth and sky, we might succeed in making a very substantial structure of our negations, but we have not laid one stone on another till, crash! the universe is upon us, thrusting its lights before our eyes, roaring in our ears, tripping up our feet.

Men used to be fond of saying that, the universe being here, we must give some account of its origin; where it came from and how it managed to get started. They argued that there must have been a God in the beginning to set the machinery in

motion, and they have been much disturbed by the theory of evolution for fear it was going to make God unnecessary. But the fact is, that there was no need to wait for the theory of evolution to return the easy answer which the argument invited; namely, that there had been no beginning, that our material universe has itself existed from all eternity.

The real mystery is not in the past but in the present. That which concerns us is not what occurred six thousand or sixty million years ago, it is the thing before us; above us and beneath us and around us and within us. For the universe is not dead, it is alive; pulsing, dancing, pounding, rushing, grasping, struggling, in every atom and every imponderable boulder of a world. From sun and planet invisible hands reach out in a clasp stronger than iron. Winter brings its sleep over the far hills, but we know that the ground waits only for the breath of spring to run green again. All about us we see, not the dry bones of a valley of death, but motion, development, the sweep of splendid energies, the play of stupendous forces.

Now, it was just these forces, so evident

in their manifestations, themselves unseen and inexplicable, that primitive peoples endowed with the attributes of personality and called gods. And if our definition of divinity has changed with the years, it is only as our view of things in general has changed.

Very early in history men began to suspect that these various forces, alike of nature and of human nature, cannot be too definitely distinguished one from the other, but are somehow tied up together, that there is a mysterious unity beneath the welter of diversity which the sun discloses. Elijah, his predecessors and successors were not only the great original prophets of religion, they were the great original prophets of science. They descried the universe—no mean achievement! Thousands of years before physicists began to talk of theories of matter and the interconvertibility of the forms of energy, before Madame Curie discovered the atoms flying to pieces in her laboratory, or Sir William Ramsay caught the elements in the very process of transformation, these men divined a suggestion of the truth that about us is no mere congeries of unre-

lated forces and materials, but an organism, with an inner, final simplicity of being. It was at once the boldest and most imposingly significant hypothesis which the mind of man ever conceived. Every discovery since made in any of the sciences has tended to confirm it, and to-day we can think in no other terms; without it our modern scientist might as well throw away his text-books and test-tubes and go out to play. The old multiplicity of things and forces has become for us organized, unified, one! And it is this central Source of all being and energy, this "universal principle of life," the "Great Organizer," [1] as Professor Soddy calls it from the standpoint of the scientist, which from the standpoint of religion we call God.

I have spoken of men denying God altogether, but in a sense there is no denying him; at most we can refuse to grant him any intelligent will, any conscious purpose, without which attributes we ordinarily withhold the sacred name. It may be that this Great Organizer of which scientists talk is a merely physical thing, without memory or foresight, without mind

[1] *Matter and Energy*, by Frederick Soddy, M.A., F.R.S., p. 194.

or heart; a tremendous, ruthless, witless energy, pushing the worlds on in their courses, grinding out here a verdure-swept earth, and there a lifeless moon, dewfalls and tornadoes, serpents and thrushes, itself meanwhile unconscious, unreasoning, and emotionless. But whether blind and dumb, or quick with intelligence and emotion, there can be no question but that the forces are there.

We cannot deny the universe, and we cannot deny that it *is* a universe, one and not many—or one as well as many. We cannot deny the great Fountain of energy and life which is at the heart of it, swinging the planets as if they were no more than billiard-balls, moulding the earth stuff into intricate forms of tree and flower, begetting now a king beast of the jungles, and now a Plato, or a Shakespeare —or a Christ.

III

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

THE existence of this first principle of life, the Great Organizer, will not meet wide dissent among thoughtful men. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," said the Psalmist, and we have generally assumed that he was deriding the atheist; on the contrary, he was merely giving us the scientific definition of a fool. This is what a fool is: a man who does not believe in God, who fails to recognize the relation between cause and effect, who sows a crop of tares expecting to reap a harvest of grain. He goes on the assumption that this is a helter-skelter, crazy, headless world, whereupon the world at once decides that it is he who lacks a head.

Our crucial question is as to what kind of a being God is. Is he—or is it—merely a vast kernel of blind forces begetting worlds and destroying them, with no knowledge of whether he makes or mars? Is he a heartless Moloch who knows but

does not care? Or is he this other Being, conceived under the image of Christ, worthy of a man's reverence and love?

For our answer we shall seek the heavens and the material earth in vain. John Fiske characterized as one of the two silliest sayings ever appearing in print the French astronomer's remark: "I have swept the heavens with my glass and found no God." For if the astronomer meant that among the stars he saw no prodigious and magnificently ordered energies, obviously his remark was silly, since we all can see the blazing evidence of such energies without the aid of glasses. Or if he meant, as he doubtless did mean, that among the stars he saw no conscious mind and no love-warm heart, his remark was still silly, for it is not among the stars that a sane man looks for mind and heart.

Did a child, perhaps, sometimes interrupt the famous astronomer while he worked, begging for permission to peep up through the wonderful instrument? And did the astronomer brush him aside impatiently, hardly waiting to explain that he was busy, searching the cold skies for some sign of intelligence and tenderness? Throw

your telescope to the scrap-heap, Lalande; while your eyes are scanning the far heavens for the trace of a god, God himself is tugging at your coat sleeve.

A strange perversity of the human intellect it is, that when we begin to discuss the divine nature we must send our minds back millions of years to the world's beginnings, or out millions of miles to the world's end.

"Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air—
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumor of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars!—
The drift of pinions, would we harken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors." [1]

In regard to the great, outlying universe, as Laplace, Lalande's greater contemporary, said with his dying breath: "What we know is little, what we do not know is immense." But there is one tiny section of the universe about which our knowledge is less severely circumscribed. We have a little world of our own, each one, including our relations

[1] Francis Thompson, *In No Strange Land.*

with the men about us, with our friends, with our children; and there, what are the laws written in nature, in *our* nature; what are the principles of life as we find them in ourselves?

We may sweep the heavens with our glass and find no evidence that nature cares for anything except that the planets do not veer from their appointed courses; but we cannot look down into our own hearts without seeing evidence of a higher concern, we cannot listen to the voice of conscience without knowing that the forces which sent *us* forth on our career make demands upon us that fall quite outside the range of mathematics.

It is no blind leap of faith we make when, looking at Christ, we see in him the "express image" of the person of God. While the scientists have been surveying the physical universe and interpreting God in terms of the laws they have discovered there, laws of physical energy and life force; we have interpreted God in terms of the laws we have found in our own nature, laws of moral consciousness. And our procedure is surely not *less* legitimate than that of the scientists, as our acquain-

tance with the suns is not more intimate and assured than our knowledge of ourselves.

In Christ we find something more than a superlatively admirable man, we find our imperative ideal. Whatever the power that launched us on the earth, the demand of that power is, that we should be like Christ. If then God's law is that men should be Christlike, what manner of being must he himself be? "He who made the ear," asks the Psalmist, "shall he not hear? he who made the eye, shall he not see?" [1] The argument of the Christian is more compelling: "He who ordains righteousness, is he not righteous? He who demands love among his children, is he not a God of love?"

Our knowledge of the character of God can come in no other way than through such an inquiry into the laws by which he operates. Even if he should break into articulate speech and, in thunder tones and perfectly good English, himself testify to us of his justice and kindness, we could accept the testimony only so far as it accorded with the principles by which we see him working.

[1] Psalms 94 : 9.

But, men protest, here is the very point of difficulty; granted that in the conscience of his creatures he has written these statutes of righteousness, his own conduct shows no such Puritanical control; he is like a factory owner who holds himself superior to the restraints with which he surrounds his workers. We look about us and see no principles of love and justice in the government of the world. Everywhere we find the good dishonored, and the bad enthroned; the prizes of life lavished on the self-seeking and the unscrupulous, the generous and the brave afflicted and unrewarded.

So we judge superficially, but is the world in fact as morally topsyturvy as it seems?

"Speak, History! Who are life's victors? Unroll the long annals and say,
Are they those whom the world calls the victors, who won the success of a day?
The martyrs, or Nero? The Spartans who fell at Thermopylæ's tryst,
Or the Persians and Xerxes? His judges, or Socrates? Pilate, or Christ?" [1]

These questions scarcely admit of two

[1] William Wetmore Story, *Io Victis.*

answers when they are once asked and frankly faced. Undoubtedly the issue is often disguised; enough promise of reward glitters along the false way so that the right way makes a call on our heroism, tests us out to know whether the right purpose is sincere; but all the conquest is with the man who chooses truth and the high enterprise, the final victory is forever with the man who follows Christ.

Such is the kind of universe we live in; which, after all, is only another way of saying that such is the kind of God who rules over us. The great Soul of the world is just and not unjust, love and not hate.

The Christian finds in Christ the perfect expression of the law of his own being; therefore he finds in Christ, necessarily, the perfect expression of God. His mind leaps from one to the other, from Christ as the ideal of humanity to Christ as the revelation of divinity, inevitably and immediately; if there is any logic involved in the process he is wholly unconscious of it. Rather does it break upon him with all the directness and certitude of an intuition; "Flesh and blood hath not

revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." [1]

NOTE.—We shall not, of course, think of God as *identified* with the universe, his life confined to the instruments of its manifestation, for our conclusion that he is intelligence and love, a spirit, necessarily involves his transcendence, as the human soul transcends the body and its physical energies. This familiar analogy, however, of the relation between human soul and body, as an explanation of the relation between God and the universe, must not be pushed too far. Unless we are to abandon all idea of an ultimate unity in reality, we must think of the existence of the universe as grounded in God as the body of man does not exist in the soul.

In view of recent pluralistic tendencies in philosophy, I may seem to have taken this underlying unity too lightly for granted, but a crass pluralism seems to me unthinkable. Even Professor James insisted that "our 'multiverse' is still a 'universe'" (*A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 325), and though he specifically grounded his unity in relations rather than in essence, he yet said, of his pluralism: "Provided you grant *some* separation among things, some tremor of independence, some free play of parts on one another, some real novelty or chance, however minute, she is amply satisfied, and will allow you any amount, however great, of real unity" (*Pragmatism*, p. 161). The real object of his attack was pantheism, with its determinism and its submergence of individuality. Bergson has sometimes been ranked as a pluralist, but a more discriminating criticism recognizes that "his philosophy may be said to be in reality an appeal from a shallower to a deeper form of unity" (H. C. Corrance, "Bergson's Philosophy and the Idea of God," *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1914. Quoted by Miller in *Bergson and Religion*, p. 108).

[1] Matthew 16 : 17.

IV

SIGNS

If a man fail to find in Christ his imperative moral ideal, it is quite hopeless to think of persuading him, as indeed it would be quite profitless to succeed in persuading him, to accept Christ's revelation of God.

No man believes in the divinity of Christ because of his belief, for example, in the virgin birth. Having already recognized Christ's divinity, we may then find in the mystery of his birth what seems to us a reasonable explanation of his unique character. We may even insist that it is the only possible explanation, and one is at liberty to bolster this position with such arguments as can be found; but meanwhile we must in all fairness remember that there are many who regard the birth story as legendary, while their faith in Christ as the Son of God is, in simple fact, unshaken.

And no one, nowadays at least, believes in the divinity of Christ because of the

evidence of the miracles. We need not hope to convince any man of the credibility of a miracle wrought nineteen hundred years ago unless in the beginning we convince him of something altogether extraordinary in the personality of the miracle-worker; we must convince him of the divinity first. Christ himself showed slight confidence in miracles as evidence of his authority, even for the immediate spectators; refusing more than once to work "signs," rebuking those who asked for them, and regularly enjoining silence on the sick whom he had healed.

For those who appreciate the character of Christ, his supremacy in the spiritual world, it will not be difficult, I think, to accept the possibility of "miracles" at his hand. Our knowledge is far too limited for us to attempt to bound the power of the spiritual over the material, or to determine the extent to which we ourselves may lay hold on the power of God. Every voluntary movement of the human body is an example of the control of the material by the spiritual; we never raise a hand or frame a word but we appropriate divine energies for the fulfilment of our

purposes, and Christ's evident spiritual superiority makes it by no means incredible that his activities should have transcended our experience. Whatever their evidential value, in any case the miracles are our wholesome reminder that there are a number of things still beyond our foot-rule philosophies.

Some good people have insisted on the miracles, I fear, not only as a sign of Christ's divinity but as an evidence of God's power; which means only that they have forgotten for the moment, as people will forget, who God is. For no evidence can ever be needed of God's power; he *is* power, all the power there is; our quest for him has been nothing else than a searching for the source of all energy, burning in the furnaces of the suns, pulsing in passion through the marching multitudes of men. Look out at the sea in a storm, at the planets bowling through measureless space, and you will need no incident of a miracle to prove that God is strong.

V

POPULAR THEOLOGY

THERE is no such thing as rejecting Christ's ethics while retaining his theology; nor is there any such thing as rejecting his theology while retaining his ethics; the two stand or fall together. In all logic and reason, that is, they stand or fall together, but, happily or unhappily, vast numbers of men are serenely emancipated from the shackles of logic and reason. I have already contended that many men find in Christ their revelation of God who refuse to accept him as their ideal of human life, and the solution of the difficulty is really not far to seek. They achieve this apparent impossibility by the simple device of a disguised and unconscious polytheism.

I suppose there has never been more than one outright monotheist among men —Christ himself; with Cæsar Borgia, perhaps, as his nearest second. Borgia worshipped a god of crime and cruelty, but

if we are to believe the chroniclers he was at least consistent, and would have said, "Thou fool," to the self-sacrificing Christ with a contempt as sincere as the pity with which Christ would have said, "Thou fool," to him.

But most of us do not think of Christ as in any sense a fool. On the contrary, we recognize his life as the highest and best life possible to humanity. Merely, we feel that for us there are other values with the promise of more satisfaction than the values which he discloses. We assume the existence of two worlds; one peopled by saints and good women and very small children, over which God reigns and in which he distributes rewards appropriate to the inhabitants; and another peopled by ordinary folk like ourselves, to whom the precious rewards of the saints are not attractive, and with whose daily affairs God has very little concern.

This common world is not ruled by a God of love; its laws are not those of service and sacrifice, but of self-aggression; here the man who seeks his life finds it, and he who finds keeps; here each must take first thought for himself, and the

Golden Rule is, that "To do the best for yourself, is finally to do the best for others."[1]

Now, if a man believed that the entire universe were conducted on this principle of rigorous selfishness, he would be a perfectly logical monotheist, whose god was Moloch. But no one does so believe. We do not hold that Christ would have been the wiser if he had counted the cost to himself and declined the cross; we do not think the martyrs ill-advised in refusing to recant; we do not despise the mother because she denies herself for the sake of her children. More than this, we grant that the law of love holds for all people, in some circumstances; no one but keeps some little garden of his life sacred to sentiment. But for most men the great working fields of life are handed over to the reign of a very businesslike, "practical" god, who has so little in common with the precepts of the gospel that ordinarily he is not called God at all.

When Ruskin speaks of our "nominal" religion in distinction from our real religion, he does not mean, I think, that the

[1] Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive: Traffic.*

former is *merely* nominal. In that case men would not devote to it even the one-seventh and the one-tenth. It is real in its sphere, but its sphere is limited. It divides the field with another, dominant religion which threatens its existence, but stops short of annihilation.

Such polytheism is, of course, utterly irrational and for a man who thinks, impossible; but most of us do not think, preferring to build our lives on contradictions. And even so we never succeed in keeping the two spheres entirely separate. The God of love, the God of our Bible and our children and our circle of friends, of our day of sickness and our hour of death, always reaches over into the other's territory with at least certain imperative negations; even in a business deal we must not lie, or cheat, or bear too hard on the man in our power. And the god of this practical, business world reaches also into the Other's territory, gradually robbing the church of its vitality and the home of its sweetness, sapping the vigor of good-will from the clasp of friendship, making of sickness a comfortless anguish, and of death a looming horror.

But though the two spheres thus encroach on one another, we still act on the assumption of their virtual independence. We recognize the laws of life as revealed in the life of Christ as valid—in their place. We have to learn only, after twenty-five hundred years, that "The Lord he is God, there is none else"; that "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

VI

THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE

I HAVE spoken of the difference between the scientific and the religious approach to the discovery of God's nature. I do not mean to suggest, however, that science has had no part in the development of theology. On the contrary, it has been the very greatness of its revelations that has embarrassed us and overwhelmed us and on occasion swept us into something like atheism.

Science never makes a discovery in any department by which the horizon is thrust outward and the universe is revealed as richer in its materials, its forces, and its laws, but that, automatically, our conception of God is likewise enlarged and enriched. And our theology does not always stand the strain of these sudden expansions.

The sixteenth century had a very definite idea of God as a kindly and righteous Monarch, dwelling in an abode of light

not far above the blue vault of the firmament. Galileo pierced that vault with his glass, and found no God—the remark would not have been silly in the sixteenth century. Gradually, before men's eyes, the universe expanded to ten thousand times its former dimensions. The propelling Energy of the worlds was revealed as incommensurately vaster than men had before dreamed, or could have dreamed. And this new Power which loomed before them, reaching through the dizzy abyss of swinging suns, they could not at once endow with the friendly, hearth-fire attributes of their God of yesterday, who from a finite heaven looked down upon a finite earth.

I shall not be the first to blame the man of science who dared to accept the new-found truth at the loss of his old faith; and neither shall I be the first to blame the man of religion who clung to his faith in the desperate conviction that somehow the strange, new instrument must lie.

The prophets of old Israel must have seemed to the masses of the people little better than atheists. Those poor little, primitive conceptions of a tribal deity,

with his dwelling-place on Horeb, had the unquestionable merit of providing a God with whom men were on speaking terms, before whom they could bring their offerings, and to whom they could pray. But how far above human fellowship must, at first, have seemed the bewildering Being of the prophetic proclamations—Lord of the whole earth, sovereign alike in Israel and Edom and Egypt, and far off Babylon, his head among the stars, his feet stalking the mountains and the seas!

And many men to-day, perhaps most men, have to re-enact something of this racial experience. That the young philosopher inclines to atheism may be due not so much to the shallowness of his thinking, as Bacon suggests, but rather to the very truth of it. He has beaten his way into a larger universe and we must give him time to make the necessary adjustments.

Our ponderous modern arguments that an infinite being cannot be personal are but an echo of the unreasoning logic of the multitudes through all the generations. Such has always been the problem; to retain the old personal attributes in con-

nection with the growing universe and its God. The common sense of mankind recognized the difficulty and bowed before it, long before philosophy knew there was any problem to be met; and when at last philosophy has solved the riddle to its entire satisfaction, the solution will no doubt be found to be a restatement of the solution by which, in crisis after crisis of the development of human knowledge, the faith of mankind has emerged triumphant from its momentary dilemma.

Some inordinately reverential folk insist that it is unworthy of God's divinity to endow him with personality, thereby representing him as a magnified man; whereupon they proceed to vindicate his dignity by depriving him of mind and will, representing him as sheer force, a magnified teakettle. It is difficult for me to believe that we are offering an affront, either to divinity or reason, in thinking of the Soul of the universe as endowed with intelligence and affection and purpose. If personality imply something other than this, we can afford to eliminate the word.

If any man protest that it is difficult to visualize such an all-pervading conscious-

ness, I freely grant the difficulty. There was an old tradition among the Hebrews—freighted, as tradition not seldom is, with more philosophy than most of the philosophies—that a man cannot look upon the face of God and live. But we look upon the face of Christ and are possessed by the confidence that we are gazing upon "the image of the invisible,"[1] in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."[2]

For some adequate knowledge of the Power that reigns behind the far-spread curtain of the heavens, within the mysterious mechanisms of nature and history, the Spring of all energies, the Dispenser of all destinies, the people of earth had been seeking since humanity's dawn. How little had the wise men of any land guessed that they would one day find him revealed, not in any blazing prodigy of the skies, but in a Galilean carpenter! Yet, by a quick flash of insight, or an inspiration of hidden reasoning, the world leaped to the conviction that he was at last disclosed as the Father of this soul.

Peter knew nothing of our elaborate

[1] Colossians 1 : 15. [2] *Idem* 2 : 9.

creeds and theologies, but in response to the Master's question, "Whom say ye that I am?" the answer burst from his lips, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God";[1] and the peculiar significance of that answer was, not that Peter had found Christ, but that he had found God.

[1] Matthew 16 : 16.

IV

THE HOLY SPIRIT

I

GOD IN THE SOUL

ORTHODOX Christian theology has always shown a strangely active aversion to pantheism; as if we were in imminent danger of plunging headlong into the infinite, losing our souls in the absolute. And I confess that I have little sympathy with the pantheist's heaven; his delight in the thought of it seems to me a perversion, like the old toper's dream of drowning in champagne. I have no wish to be drowned, even in divinity.

Moreover, for a man to confuse his identity with God's must have unfortunate consequences. Especially, it relieves him from the fear of making a mistake, after which he is not only an uncomfortable companion, but an undesirable citizen.

But, happily, we of the West are generally immune from the dangers of a panthe-

istic philosophy; for philosophy, when it turns pantheist, makes gods of us *all*, while the true Occidental never does this; at most he makes a god of himself, leaving the rest of us to the orthodox frailties of our humanity.

The real danger for our thinking is not lest we bring God too near to us, but lest we set him too far away. By definition, he is the basis of all being, the source of all energy; it is precisely for the Soul of the universe that we have been seeking all the centuries; and surely the long search will profit us little if, as at last it leads us to him, we proceed to set him apart from the universe we have been endeavoring to explain. To what purpose shall we affirm that God is good if we are then to deny that he is God?

Yet such is the capital error to which Western thought inveterately tends. And our aberration is wrapped up with the fundamental problem of all metaphysics; this, namely: if God is in and through all the universe, mountains and men alike, if "in him we live and move and have our being,"[1] where then is there room

[1] Acts 17 : 28.

for the autonomy of any human soul? While the East has tended to solve the problem, simply, by denying that man has any autonomy, the way of pantheism; the West has tended to solve it, with equal simplicity, by denying man's dependence on God, the way of deism. And in each case the negative violates the plain facts of experience; for, as we risk intellectual suicide when we begin to question the unity of the universe, so we have too much evidence within consciousness itself to question the individuality of the human soul.

Our ignorance is much vaster than our knowledge, but these two facts we know, if we know anything—harmonize them as one may—that as far as we live at all, we live in God, as dependent on him as the splash of light on yonder wall is dependent on the burning sun; and that, withal, we are mysteriously free to choose and act for ourselves, even to cut ourselves off from his fellowship and to defy his will. The two facts may look at each other askance, but we at once find ourselves in trouble when we look askance at either of them.

The problem of the relation of God to the world becomes most enigmatical in connection with the existence of evil. How can evil exist in a world in which, as Paul says, "there is no power but of God,"[1] if God be wholly good? The question sounds formidable, but our realization that it is a part of the larger, unsolved problem we have been considering ought to warn us not to be too facile with our conclusions. For the practical purposes of religion I am inclined to think we can be content with the simple, negative proposition that the evil, somehow, does not exist as evil in the will of God. Beyond this, it may safely be said that the highest apparent purpose of creation, in the development of moral personalities, would be inconceivable without the possibility of an effective choice between right-doing and wrong-doing; and there may even be a ray of truth in the contention of Browning and the Christian Scientists, that "The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound"; the mere absence of good, as darkness is the absence of light. This theory has plausibility and will do no harm unless we are

[1] Romans 13 : 1.

tempted by it to underrate the forces arrayed against us. Any man will fare ill in life's contest who imagines that, because evil has been reduced to a metaphysical negation, therefore he has no real battle to fight. A vacuum is uncompromisingly negative, but we shall still do well not to get caught in it. Whatever their true standing in the universe, the forces of evil assail the soul, as the forces of disease assail the body, with all the savageness of a positive and prodigious reality.

No mystery, however, attaches to the existence of good in the world. Of it we know both the source and the ground of its being. All wisdom, righteousness, love, joy, has its *spring* in God not only, but it continually exists as part of the vast current of divine energy.

In the beginning it was God's very breath which breathed into this human frame of ours the gift of life, and still every breath we draw is of the divine life, alike in the physical atmosphere of crisp winter air and perfume-laden summer breeze, and in the moral atmosphere of the world's kindness and truth and love of right.

"Dig down far enough in any man," said Augustine, "and you will find the divine," for the good that lingers in the worst of men is a reminder of their high spiritual lineage, a spark of that primeval fire in which all life consists. And when through the ashes of our selfishness and lusts the spark bursts into flame, it is the very life of God that has conquered in the life of man.

Only once in the vast drama of human history has the divine life found full expression on the earth. In the character of Christ the disciples descried a gleaming reflection of the character of God, "the effulgence of his glory and the very image of his substance."[1] And they were not so ingeniously stupid as to think of him as a little flesh and blood model of Infinity, representing and revealing God as the reduction in the museum represents the Parthenon. The old poets of Israel had seen the shining of the very glory of God in the refulgent heavens, and now these new poets of the soul saw God in Christ. His smile was to them but a completer manifestation of the beauty which they saw in

[1] Hebrews 1 : 3.

the stars and the flowers, the music of his voice a more consummate embodiment of the melody which they heard in the song of the birds and in the wind among the trees; the power by which he opened blind eyes was to them God's power; the wisdom that filled his words, God's wisdom; the love that thrilled and—too exquisite for the poor human chords to endure—at last broke his heart, the very love of God.

God it was whom men had been seeking through all the years, "if haply they might feel after him and find him," "not far from any one of us" and yet concealed by the very vastness of his revelation; and it was God whom now they had found, the very essence of his being incarnate in Christ.

And then, behold! a miracle. They discovered that a transmutation had come upon their own lives; they found the character of Christ, in some part at least, reproduced in themselves. Up to a certain noonday Paul had been of one nature, but from that moment he realized that he was of a totally different nature. He saw, moreover, that that which had happened to him had happened also to the earlier

disciples, and he believed that the experience was open to all men—Jew and Gentile alike. In this confidence he went out to persuade the race-proud Greeks and the lords of Rome to find their revelation of God in the life of a Galilean workman. And as he went, lo! for a man here, and for a score or a thousand there, the cloud of despair that had darkened the world parted. Behind him he left a trail of song. Idol-worshippers cast away their idols, and along with their idols they cast away their old sensuous pleasures, their old practices of untruth and dishonor. Everywhere he found himself face to face with transformed, "converted" men.

"Ye must be born again," Christ had said, and the teacher in Israel had wondered what he meant; but to the disciples there was now no mystery in the saying. The man they had been was dead, and they had arisen to find themselves changed; animated, literally, by a new spirit, that very spirit of wisdom and might, and reverence and love, which Isaiah and all the prophets with him had ever identified with the Spirit of God.[1]

[1] Isaiah 11 : 2; *cf.* Acts 2 : 16 *f.*

"For who among men," Paul asks, "knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God. . . . For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."[1] Identification of the life of man with the infinite life of God could scarcely go further; so far did Paul feel that he and his fellows were permeated by the divine life that they could actually read God's thoughts from the inside, as a man reads the thoughts of his own heart.

These men of the early Church spoke of themselves familiarly as "saints," holy men; even of their bodies it was said, "For the temple of the Lord is holy, and such are ye."

When Paul came to Ephesus on his third missionary journey he found a little group of men who already professed to be Christians, but on the part of the Ephesian Jews in general there was a very confused notion of the teachings of Christ,

[1] I Corinthians 2 : 11 *ff.*

with only the vaguest conception of the cleavage between the old religion and the new, and the question at once arose in Paul's mind, Had these men really undergone a vital Christian experience? The apostle did not conduct an examination as to their knowledge of the doctrine of the atonement or of justification by faith; "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" he asked. "We have not so much as heard," they said, "whether there be any Holy Ghost," and the answer seemed to Paul sufficient evidence that they had not yet been fully admitted to membership in the household of Christ.[1]

If Paul should make his appearance in our modern Church he would find no such ignorance, for we have all received our theological instruction in the doctrine of the Trinity. But, after all the centuries of controversy and definition and nice discriminations, if he should insist on pressing his critical question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" I fear some of us might falter in our answer. There are a good many minds for which the Holy Ghost has been banished to a vague dwell-

[1] Acts 19 : 1 *ff.*

ing-place among the clouds, or reduced to a mathematical abstraction.

But for Paul and his companions the Holy Spirit was no abstraction; they had discovered it not in logic, but in life, in an experience which to them seemed otherwise unaccountable. The miracle has been in progress now for almost two thousand years, and it no longer astonishes us, seems, indeed, quite a part of nature; but in the beginning they sensed the real wonder of it: that a man, or a thousand men, could be instantaneously re-created; affections, interests, motives, relations, all suddenly changed.

They were not afraid to say that they saw God incarnate in men. And for us the Holy Spirit must fade into a mere absurdity of theological dogmatics, except as we also see it, active and potent, in the reborn spirits of the men and women about us; as we conceive it, not as something apart from men, an influence acting on us from without, but as itself the inner, actuating principle of our renewed impulses and chastened desires; "so united to the faculties of the soul," as Jonathan Edwards wrote, "that he becomes there a prin-

ciple or spring of new nature and life";[1] a new spirit which has taken possession of the very citadel of the mind, replacing the old, generating in us a "new man . . . after the image of him that created him,"[2] so that we are no longer impelled by an earthly spirit of darkness and evil, but by a spirit of holiness, the divine Spirit of light and love.

In a former chapter I spoke of the travail by which a man must attain to the vision of Christ and to the accomplishment of the Christian ideal. The endeavor would be quite hopeless but for this; that the good in us is the omnipotent God in us, that the Christ ideal carries in itself all the energy of the infinite. Literally, while you "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, . . . it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure."[3]

It is not surprising that Christian theology has shown an active aversion to pantheism, for while it has appreciated the calamity involved in pantheistic philosophy, it has yet seemed to preach pantheism.

[1] *Religious Affections*, part III. [2] Colossians 3 : 10.
[3] Philippians 2 : 12 *f.*

In the treatise from which I have just quoted, Edwards seems in one instance actually to have frightened himself by the explicitness of his language. After saying that the life of Christ is not conveyed into the believers "as the sap of a tree may be conveyed into a vessel, but is conveyed as sap is from a tree into one of its living branches," he draws the conclusion that our gift of the Holy Spirit constitutes a real "participation of God"; whereupon, with suspicious violence, he at once turns to say: "Not that the saints are made partakers of the essence of God, and so are *godded* with God, and *christed* with Christ, according to the abominable and blasphemous language and notions of some heretics." We shall agree that the *language* he imputes to his heretics is, perhaps, blasphemous, and surely abominable, but their *notions* do not seem so clearly distinguishable from his. He would have us believe that the divine life flows into us as the sap flows into one of the living branches of the tree, so that we have a "participation of God," but he holds us no better than atheists if we believe that we are made "partakers" of

the divine "essence"! The reader may be pardoned for feeling that, with the black gulf of heresy yawning on either hand, he is left balanced, precariously, on nothing.

Nevertheless, the distinction which Edwards drew is not to be dismissed lightly. He was trying to depict a vital union between the finite and the infinite, which should yet not involve absorption, and his language failed him for the good reason that he was ranging at heights where human knowledge fails. The truth is that we do not know the real relation between any two things in the wide universe, except such things as we ourselves unite—the button and the coat, or the wheels within one of our mechanisms. We know nothing whatever of the essential nature of the links that bind atom to atom, or the earth to the sun, that hold our own feet on the earth, or that unite spirit and matter in the human anatomy; we do not know the inner connection between trunk and branch, seed and stalk, father and child here among men; we do not know what spirit is, or what life is, or what matter is. There is really a very great deal that we do not know, and it is the merest presumption in

us to pretend to expound the subtleties and distinctions of the relations which subsist between Christ and the Father, between man and God.

But we do know that the relations exist; that, while still retaining our individual identity, we are dependent for our very existence on him who is the ground of all being. We know, moreover, that as the good conquers in us we share more and more fully in the divine life, but that with this, paradoxically, our own individuality is not diminished, but intensified. The long, bitter, and, to many, apparently senseless Trinitarian controversies have been more than anything else a conflict to maintain this paradox; to maintain it on the one hand against the logic of the pantheist who would smother man in the Absolute, and on the other against the logic of the old-fashioned Unitarian deist who would banish God from his universe and leave us stranded in a world without a soul.

II

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

THROUGH the gift of the Spirit, Christians have thus recognized a bond of mystic but real union between the human soul and God; and through the same gift they have recognized a bond of mystic but real union among human souls themselves. "That they may be one," Christ prayed, "even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected in one."[1] "In one Spirit," said Paul, "were we all baptized into one body."[2]

The doctrine of the unity of the Spirit, like that of the Holy Spirit itself, was no product of speculation; it, too, was the statement of a fact of experience.

From the beginning, the differences which had divided the world up to the coming of Christ, Jew and Greek, rich and poor, bond and free, faded from the minds of the Christian company. The young disciples, of whatever race or social station or degree of culture, felt themselves drawn together

[1] John 17 : 23. [2] I Corinthians 12 : 13.

not only as friends, but as a family, an organism; for the establishment of the Church did not rest on any arbitrary decree, it was spontaneous and inevitable. Caught up by the flood of the common life which surged through them, they gathered, not in order to found a Church, but because the Church was already there, demanding expression in organization and assemblies and common tasks.

The Church grew as naturally and at the same time, so far as our knowledge goes, as mysteriously as the flower grows. All these leaves and petals and branchlets, pick them off one by one and each is a thing by itself; and yet, as they grow there, each is not a thing by itself; all together they constitute one plant, organized into unity by the familiar but utterly mysterious power which we call life. Such was Christ's figure of the vine, in which he depicted the unity of his followers with himself and with one another. And to like effect Paul used the figure of the body with its many members.

Churchgoing is not merely a respectable, pious, and more or less useful custom; it springs out of the very instincts of the

Christian faith. So far as we are possessed by the Spirit which links us with the Eternal, so far are we indissolubly linked with every other man who shares that Spirit; participating in the fellowship of a common life; concerned not only for one another's welfare, but actually finding our highest satisfaction in the abundance of the common good, feeling the pinch of our brother's need and the exhilaration of his joy.

The last phrase of the Apostolic Benediction is our continual reminder of this great truth. In invoking "the communion of the Holy Ghost," Paul did not intend that his readers were to have fellowship *with* the Spirit—the New Testament makes no mention of prayer or worship addressed to the Holy Spirit—but that through the common blessing of the Spirit they were to enjoy a living communion with one another.

Here it is that the paradox of diversity intensified in unity becomes most apparent. "Human progress," said Herbert Spencer, "is toward greater mutual dependence, as well as toward greater individuation." [1]

[1] *Social Statics*, chap. XXX, § 14.

As we merge our life in the life of the multitude, our own souls are not impoverished but immeasurably enriched. The superman of modern prophecy, a being superior to sympathy, too self-contained to respond to the spiritual currents of the crowd, too supremely great to care what others think or suffer, is really a product of the nightmare of a moral indigestion; far from having the soul of a god, he has not the soul of an ant. That alone which saves him from utter condemnation is that he does not exist, nor ever can; for every man has within him some elements of the divine, and these elements are in their very nature forces which reach out and link him, inseparably, with his kind. God *is* love, and the more fully any human soul partakes of the divine life, the wider and deeper are the relations in which it finds itself bound to the great spiritual world in which it lives.

III

GOD IN SOCIETY

The divine Spirit welds into unity all those who share it; and, conversely also, whenever and wherever any bond of union is found among men, there we may know the Holy Spirit is at work.

Every united company of men, every partnership and union and social group, is in some sense a divine thing. Unrighteousness, selfishness, in any form, never yet held any two men together, and never can; it acts always as a tremendous, centrifugal force driving men apart. Nothing can hold men together except love, except God.

It is true that men often combine for evil ends. The Church itself has frequently been used as a mere instrument of commercial gain and political oppression. And this is our deepest shame, that we prostitute our very divinity. The first divine gift to the individual is freedom, and we so turn this freedom into lawless

license that the very beasts of the jungle are guilty of no such deliberate savagery, no such unnatural degeneracy, as men at their worst. And this first of divine gifts to society, the capacity for union, we likewise turn to a curse. Men in companies commit outrages to which as individuals they would not stoop. They must gather in a mob in order to burn a negro at the stake; they must form a corporation or a labor union to teach us the full horrors of a bloodless commercialism.

Nevertheless, even though men be united for some wholly selfish and unrighteous cause, it is yet through the good in them, not the evil, that the union is made possible. If there were not some honor among thieves, we should have no gangs of ruffians, our marauders would always come singly. Only a century or so ago one of the greatest of English economists prophesied that the corporations would never grow to large proportions, and he based his forecast on the inherent selfishness of human nature; for these great industrial combinations, with all their crimes, could not exist were it not for the cohesive force of certain fine qualities in men: mutual faith, with the honesty

on which that faith is based, and the willingness to share both loss and gain.

Educators in the East have found difficulty in developing Western games among their students, for the reason that every boy's ambition is wholly concerned with his own achievements, the youngsters having no idea of team-play or team-victories. To those Eastern students, and perhaps scarcely less so to our own, the athletic game becomes a real means of Christian grace. Whatever helps us merge our own interests in the interests of a larger group, plays its part, large or small, in ushering in that unity of the race which is the final purpose of God's Spirit in the world.

From time immemorial marriage has been solemnized with religious rites, because men have instinctively recognized the sanctity of the bond that binds husband to wife, parent to child. In the home was the first altar set up; all other altars have been kindled, and kindled again, from its flame; and if its fires are ever allowed to die out, then must every other sacred fire in the world go black.

I do not know what price the nations must yet pay for the houses into which they

have huddled so many millions of their people, hovels in which the divine spark is so easily smothered, but it is certain they shall pay in full. The rentals of cheap tenements are not really low, they are only deferred. In the old superstitious days men used to be afraid to lay desecrating hands on any sacred thing for fear God would strike them dead for the sacrilege. And the fear was not altogether a superstition; such is still the inevitable judgment—no swift lightning-stroke, but death, nevertheless, sure and inexorable as fate. And the home is a sacred thing.

Popular thought has regarded the nation also as under a peculiar divine protection. Men have always found it easy to say, "For God, for home, and for country," linking the three in a sort of trinity. Until recent years the idea of separating Church and State had hardly occurred to men's minds, and the idea of separating religion and the state never can occur to men except as they cease to believe in either one or the other.

From Hobbes to Rousseau the so-called contract theory of the state was much in vogue, according to which it was held

that the men of the community had originally entered into a bargain, pledging themselves to protect and help one another, each for the profit he was to reap from the compact for himself. And the notion has so much of fact to build on, that each member of the community does derive a real benefit out of political union. But a little thought serves to make clear that the state does not rest on any such bargain, nor ever did. Men look upon their flag, not as the trade-mark of a going concern in which they have financial and other allied interests, but as the symbol of something larger than themselves, all the interests of which are yet their interests, for which it is their privilege to live and their honor to die.

If it is true, as John says, that "every one that loveth is begotten of God,"[1] we may assume that as far as love enters any heart, parent's, child's, friend's, patriot's, so far has God entered. And this merging of the individual welfare in the common good which is the basis of all national life, what is it, so far as it goes, but the unity of the Holy Spirit in the minds of men?

[1] I John 4 : 7.

Well may the sight of a battered rag of colored bunting send the crowds mad with enthusiasm; mad till they can find no other adequate expression of their frenzy than to rush out, yelling and furious, into a tempest of carnage. For the flag reminds them, by the mystery of its symbolism, of that larger life in which they share and which, otherwise, they had forgotten. It is enough to electrify a man into deeds of heroism to know that he is part of a mighty nation of men, the interests of a multitude bound up with his, as he shares the experiences, joy or pain, welfare or disaster, of a hundred million of his kind. For consider the size to which he has sprung, from five feet ten to the dimensions of a continent!

It is, of course, very silly in him to seek an outlet for his heroism in the slaughter of his fellows; there are so many better ways in which a man may play the hero. But, after all, his deeper desire is not to kill the other man, it is to smash the other flag. Every war has its stories of soldiers from the opposing lines hobnobbing with one another in the lull of battle; between man and man, in the beginning at least, there

is no hate. But the flags are at war, symbol as they are not only of union but of division; and division we cannot tolerate. No man can ever be satisfied with anything less than partnership in a world-wide empire. To miss any South Sea island out of the vast dominion of our souls is like feeling the pinch of a tight shoe. Alexander lives again in every farmer's boy and factory hand. We may unite in peace, or we may unite in battle; one thing only is written in the stars: that we may not live apart. We must and shall be brothers, though we be compelled to seal our brotherhood in blood. And war will continue, despite all the eloquence of the pacifists, until the federation of the world is achieved; until the unity of the race finds expression in political institutions which embrace and realize the family of nations.

IV

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Little minds see nothing but the ambitions of bigotry in the old Catholic endeavor to make the Church mistress of the earth, supreme in political as in domestic affairs, in commerce as in worship, dictator of all arts and sciences no less than of the creeds.

Yet what a bold and magnificent ideal that endeavor represented!—nothing less than that the whole world should be organized in the spirit of Christ.

Already the world had been organized, under the Roman Empire, in the spirit of Mammon. There, before men's eyes, was a vast earthly kingdom in which the energies of the race were requisitioned and harnessed in the interest of the commercial wealth and military glory of the few. Now burst upon men's vision the hope of a kingdom in which the energies of the race were to be requisitioned and harnessed in the interest of the spiritual wealth and glory of all. Politics, commerce, literature, music, painting, architecture, play—all were

to be made the servants of that which is highest in humanity. No department of human life, no relation between a man and his neighbor, was to be excepted from the sway of this new, beneficent tyranny of love and righteousness.

We cannot wonder at the domination which this dream acquired over the imagination of Christendom, and we cannot but admire the vastness and efficiency of the organization which was effected. For a thousand years men watched the structure rising, filling the earth; and they saw it as the veritable temple of Christ; until, one day, Luther smote the foundations of it with his giant sledge and behold! rottenness. The splendid cathedral, with its base set in eternity, its pillars of truth more enduring than the hills, its spires lost in the very heavens, was suddenly reduced to a contemptible ruin; wrecked, not honorably by time or cannon-balls, but by the weakness of its own fraudulent workmanship.

The Church had set out to organize the world in the spirit of Christ; and if she had been willing to lose, she might have won. But she chose to win, at the expense of her

ideal, and, becoming mistress of the world, she lost her own soul. At the end, grown rich and proud and hard, trading for her own gain on the religious sentiments she ought gladly to have died to serve, she retained little of Christianity except the name. And to-day when men talk of world-union they think in terms of secular governments, not of popes and presbyteries. The Church, through her own organization and by her own authority, will never again be given the opportunity to build that temple; she has forfeited the right to try.

Little wonder that men suspect the Church, and berate it, and despise it. Nevertheless, we ought to remind ourselves that the Church is no mysterious, impersonal thing, constituted of creeds and candles and cathedrals; it is constituted of men, and these not a few priests and preachers, but the heterogeneous multitudes. In the Middle Ages it was literally Catholic, for it embraced the entire population of Europe, the only qualification for membership being a birth certificate. And the men who gathered for worship of a Sunday morning were the same

men who the day before had returned from battle, or driven their horses in the fields. No subtle change swept over them as they passed the sacred portals. The morals of the Church of Europe were the morals of the people of Europe, the Christianity of the Church was the Christianity of the people, and the failure of the Church was the failure of humanity itself.

It was with a true insight into the secret of failure that the Church, at the Reformation, turned from its dreams of empire-building to devote itself to the business of realizing the spirit of Christ in the individual man. Luther has been accused of a sad lack of social sympathy in the condemnation which he visited on the poor peasants in connection with their war against oppression. But it was not so much lack of sympathy that troubled Luther as a point of view; he recogniżed no "problems" other than the problems of the individual soul. And later Protestantism, up to within very recent years, has consistently maintained this point of view. We have been willing to preach temperance in the life of our church-members, but we have been very doubtful

whether a prohibition crusade was within the proper sphere of the Church. We have discussed the right of the Christian to take part in the slaughter of the battle-field, but we have been very slow to enter into the political field and make an assault on the institution of war. We have preached industry and thrift and neighborly kindness, by which poverty may be prevented or alleviated in the individual, but we have looked with suspicion on any movement aiming at such a readjustment of industrial conditions as might strike at the roots of our destructive inequalities of wealth.

And we have found ample warrant for our individualism in the New Testament. "What shall *I* do that *I* may inherit eternal life?" "What must *I* do to be saved?"—could anything be further from the purview of a social gospel?

In the Old Testament there is almost nothing to correspond to such questions. The prophets of ancient Israel were looking for a day of national deliverance; one is at a loss whether to characterize them more as preachers or as statesmen; from their sermons we might construct a

fairly complete history of their times. The kings and armies of the earth are forever in the foreground of their pictures.

But through the New Testament we move in a different atmosphere. From its documents you could never construct a history of New Testament times. Kings and armies appear, but they are well in the background. Here we are dealing with men on their more essentially personal side. If a delegation of Assyrians had waited upon Isaiah, we should assume that their mission had something to do with the political relations of Assyria and Israel; but when a delegation of Greeks wished to see Jesus, no one for a moment imagines that their conversation was to have anything to do with the political relations of Israel and Greece. "My kingdom," said Christ, "is not of this world."

There are men who would have us believe that this individualism of the New Testament was not a gain but a loss. The charge has been freely brought against the old-time evangelistic preaching that it was rooted in a mere self-seeking, with each man concerned only for the interests of his own soul. The true Christian, it

has been said, will cease to occupy himself with such narrow considerations; in a consecrated self-forgetfulness, rather, he will be willing to obliterate himself for the good of the world.

The question at once arises, however, whether obliterating himself is really going to conduce to the good of the world. Your reformer who is militantly concerned for purity in elections, but who turns out to be something of a crook in his own business, finds his political enthusiasms discredited. Before he sets out to purify the community, we insist on his cleaning his own house.

We do not hear of the saints of the early Church taking any conspicuous part in national affairs. It was the Pharisees, not the Christians, who with desperate heroism defended Jerusalem against the armies of Rome. The young Christians were distinguished rather by the stainlessness of their lives in the midst of an evil world; living together in the spirit of Jesus and making it their supreme effort to bring others into the mystic circle of their fellowship. But just in this they were rendering a service to the state beyond that of any

war-lord or senator. They were moulding the stuff out of which nations are made; for what is the most perfect government, and the best system of laws, and the most equitable social and industrial institutions, with a race of men that is degenerate? The first and greatest possible gift of Christianity to the world was the gift of a rejuvenated manhood.

But this rejuvenated manhood was never designed to exhaust its energies in the wilderness, apart from the world and its affairs. It is inconceivable that it should do so. It is often argued that because Christ himself made no effort to control and readjust the political and industrial institutions of his day, therefore Christianity has no concern with such institutions to the end of time. The easy inference is debatable, but I have no mind to debate it. Once, long ago, I might have done so, but not now. I do not urge that Christian people should seek industrial and political control, any more than Christ sought it. I urge merely that they have it, as Christ did not. They have fought for it in the form of the ballot, they have slaved for it in the form of cash, they have

contrived and conspired for it, they have prayed for it, they have sacrificed their children and their neighbors' children for it, they have on occasion broken all the laws of God and man for it, they have inherited it from fathers who died for it, and they have got it. And having it, they are responsible for the use of it.

A man may say, of course, that while business and political affairs concern him in his capacity as merchant or as citizen, they do not concern him as a Christian; a distinction which might have been expected to go out of fashion definitely with the passing of Charles I. In his private life Charles seems to have been an almost exemplary Christian gentleman, faithful in his domestic relations and punctilious in his devotions. But on the throne he felt himself bound by no religious scruples; there he was no longer Christian, but king. And the priests administered their last rites to the doomed prince on the apparent assumption that religion had, indeed, nothing to do with his politics, but merely with the manner in which he treated his wife and said his prayers. But the Puritans assumed that, on the throne or off, they

were dealing with one Charles Stuart, accused like any common criminal of deceit and murder, and declared guilty before God. And at the block the Puritan theory found a crude but convincing verification; there was no axe in the realm sharp enough to divide between the king and the man.

The early Christians took little part in political affairs, it is true; but men are not likely to be very active politically when they are busy trying to save their heads from the political powers. And if they did not seek to direct events, they were at least not loath to condemn those in whose hands the direction lay. I have said that we find in the New Testament no such close connection between religion and the political and social movements of the time as in the Old; but so much connection we find, that the world-powers loom always in the background, the embodiment of all that is selfish and evil.

Christ himself definitely contrasted the spirit of his followers with the spirit in which the world was then governed;[1] and though Paul had a kindly word to

[1] Luke 22 : 25*f.*

say for the rulers, recognizing as he did the need of authority, its divine sanction, and the consequent obligation which rested on all men to obey its laws, yet even in Paul's mind such a crowning wrong as the crucifixion was no mere incidental miscarriage of justice, but deeply typical, revealing the heart of darkness and disorder in the government of the world.[1] When we come to the book of Revelation we find the imperial government depicted as a Wild Beast, cruel, gluttonous, lascivious, in deliberate rebellion against the kingdom of God. And succeeding Christian literature maintains this attitude of unrelieved condemnation for two centuries.

Then, in the year of our Lord 323, occurred a startling event in the Roman Empire. The Church has pointed to it as the first stupendous world-triumph of the cross. Shrewd critics have seen in it a disaster.

Christianity became the established, imperial religion. At last the sceptre passed from Saul to Samuel, from David to Nathan, from the king who had sinned to

[1] I Corinthians 2 : 8.

the prophet who had dared to denounce the sin.

What a transformation the world had a right to expect after all the condemnation which Christian preachers had been hurling at the world-rulers for three centuries! And we should not be fair to disguise the fact that there were modifications in the old order. Almost at once Christianity on the throne decreed that the killing of a slave by his master was homicide, forbade the exposure of infants, abolished the practice of branding convicts, and instituted other beneficent reforms. But there was no transformation. The Christian princes accepted Cæsar's crown, and with it they took his sword and his lust of power, and all the rich heritage of pagan inequalities.

Then, after a day or two by divine reckoning, another enactment on the part of the Almighty. If these Christian princes turn pagan when they ascend the throne, the power shall be taken from them and intrusted to the people themselves; to the multitudes of my Christian people, that they may govern the world in righteousness.

And what accounting can we give of the century or more since we, in the name of

God and democracy, ascended the throne of the world's dominion? Have we, like the princes, turned pagan when we were set in authority? Suppose that Christ should visit the earth to-day; that he should visit our jails and observe the manner in which we treat our criminals; that he should enter our saloons and learn that the state derives a considerable proportion of its revenue from such traffic in poverty and crime; that he should walk through our slums and see the suffering poverty of the multitudes in the face of the unprecedented luxury of the few; that he should find men, and women and little children, working long hours for something less than a living wage in the richest country God ever made; that he should find almost the whole world in the midst of the ravages of war—what would be—what must be —Christ's verdict on a world with Christianity on the throne?

The answer is pitifully obvious; but, thank God, it *is* obvious. At every point our civilization is being subjected to a merciless criticism, with the Christian spirit frankly accepted as the standard of judgment. We are no longer complacent in

the face of the old wrongs. Even the most conservative of us cannot escape a vague feeling of discomfort. Never before did war raise such a revulsion of horror and pity in men's minds; nor did drunkenness, nor white slavery, nor poverty, nor industrial oppression.

Is there any so blind that he cannot see the signs of the times? We are too good for the life we are living. The human conscience is too enlightened any longer to endure the codes we have inherited from the past. The old régime is outgrown.

It is a new spirit that has taken possession of the mind of man; a spirit of larger fraternity, of truer justice, a fuller measure of the Spirit of God. And this newly descended Spirit acts on the material of human society just as a living seed acts on the material of the earth; taking that material and, with all the energy of the Eternal, organizing it into such forms as will give expression to the peculiar genius of its own life.

In this vast, cosmic process a man may feel that there is little he can do. And the Spirit of the Age has sometimes been

represented in such transcendent terms as to make it seem as hopeless for us to influence its operation as to aid or impede the motion of the planet on which we are swirled through space;

> "As if good days were shapen of themselves,
> Not of the very life-blood of men's souls."[1]

In human society God works through the work of men. The difference between the Europe of to-day and the Europe of the Dark Ages—and the dust of battle must not be permitted to blind our eyes to the march of the centuries—is due to nothing else than the slow accumulation of the fighting idealism of multitudes of obscure men and women, with their leaders, who revolted against the evils of their times. The difference between modern America and the Rome of Nero's bloody reign may be computed, foot by foot, in terms of the lives of heroes, mostly nameless, who refused to be content with a world which was at any point untrue to the principles of the life of Christ.

So much we may accomplish, that we may bear our due part in the shaping of a

[1] Lowell, *The Cathedral.*

better to-morrow. And out of the endeavor will come another, more immediate accomplishment; once set our hearts on the creation of a nobler world, and of a sudden we find ourselves citizens of that commonwealth of our dreams. All the evils, the wrongs, the limitations, will not have perished from the earth, but they will have fallen from our souls. Already we shall have found admission to that better country, of which poets have sung, the hope of which has cheered all the long, battle-strewn path of human history. In our devotion to the welfare of the brotherhood, we shall have found the answer to the cry of every awakening human spirit: "What must I do that *I* may inherit eternal life?"

Man's life is in the future; what he has and is counts little, his character is the sum of his desires. Tell us what a man wishes and how seriously he wishes it, the manner of world he is vigorously resolved to create, or to have a hand in creating, with the number of people it includes and the amount of territory it covers—of the size of his own house-lot, or how much larger—and you have told

us about him all that the moralist cares to know.

If his desires change, by any gradual process or in any lightning-flash of revelation, the man in him changes with them; growing into godlikeness as he achieves partnership in the purposes of God, partaking of the divine Spirit just in so far as he shares the divine will.

Therefore Christ's first call was to faith, not in himself, but in the coming of the kingdom,[1] in the realization of God's purposes for the race of men. His "gospel" was, that the kingdom was at hand. The first petition which he put into the mouths of his disciples was, not "Forgive us our debts," but "Thy kingdom come." And if this be the real prayer of any man, his primary and dominant motive, the thing he is after in life as seriously and practically as Napoleon was after military dominion, or as some of our modern millionaires and their emulators are after stocks and bonds, then for his own life already the kingdom is come; in his mind the Spirit of the Most High is enthroned.

[1] Mark 1 : 14 *f.*

V

THE CROSS

I

THE PROBLEM OF PROVIDENCE

MONOTHEISM is at best a drastic faith, scarcely less incredible than the universe itself. One might hesitate to accept it but for the still more preposterous incredibility of its alternatives.

The unwillingness of the ancient Israelites to put away their idols was not all due to the bewildering vastness of the conception of God to which the prophets called them. They felt themselves living in the midst of a world that was in large part hostile, and they desired a God who would help them in their contest against the malevolent forces of nature and of surrounding tribes. Such a God their idol-worship provided them, while this all-sovereign God of the prophets, whose hand was in the famine and the flood as in the sunshine and the dew, who sent the dis-

asters and led the devastating armies of Damascus and Nineveh, seemed to them, practical people as they were, worse than no God at all.

And such is the permanent, glaring dilemma of monotheism. Men are forever finding in the universe about them an enemy rather than a friend, and their souls demand a God whose face, like their own, is set against the hostile forces. Monotheism has no such God to offer. Its premise is that the universe is one and friendly, that the smallest sparrow cannot fall unheeded, and that "all things work together for good" to the righteous man.

Such, at least, is the inevitable conclusion of Christian monotheism. A man might conceivably think of the primal universal Energy as malevolent, or indifferent, or fickle-minded; disposing its laws with a malicious desire to injure men, or having no care for human welfare, or distributing now good and now evil in accordance with the mood of the moment. But it is generally assumed nowadays that there is in the constitution of things an all-dominating force of some sort which consistently "makes for righteousness," and

in Christianity certainly we have the picture of a God who is altogether good, reigning in and through the universe with all-embracing love.

I confess that most of the Christians I have known do not more than half believe that God is love. Not daring openly to deny the doctrine, they find ready means of evading it.

A woman came to my house the other day, for example, who refused to go out by the door that happened to be most convenient, for the reason that it was not the door by which she had entered; to go out by any other might involve her in "bad luck." This woman had been trained in the Christian faith and would probably have been shocked had I suggested a doubt as to the infallibility of Scripture or the Apostles' Creed, but she believed that the destinies of her life were in some part controlled by a Power of such mental and moral idiocy that she was to be penalized for leaving a house by the wrong door. Of course she could not have believed that the God of our Bible would descend to such inanity; merely, the God of our Bible had nothing to do with the matter.

He was probably busy burnishing the stars and prevailing on people to go to church, while the actual fortunes of the day were under the direction of monkey-brained fiends who do not know good from evil, but who keep their eyes open for folk who break mirrors, or spill salt, or sit down thirteen at a table. Such people would be indignant if told that they were on the same plane as the devil-worshippers of Ceylon, and, for the matter of that, they are not quite on the same plane; the Cingalese have wit enough to know what God they worship.

Such is one way out of the dilemma of God's love; the way of ancient superstition, worshipping devils. Another is the way of modern science, worshipping law. The theory is that long ago God created the world and set it in motion, but that now it has passed out of his control. The universe proved too strong for the hand that made it and pursues its ruthless way, crushing innocence and slaughtering babies, quite heedless of the benevolent being who started the machinery with the best of intentions, and who tries to compensate for his present helplessness by kindly sympathy. A volcanic eruption in Italy, or a

flood in China, and our hearts bleed for the pity of it; but we must not blame God! for it is the work of inexorable, irresistible, natural laws altogether beyond his authority. And thus we seek to save his character at the expense of his divinity.

Are we then actually to believe that this universe, with its deaths, diseases, and disasters, its pestilences and wrecks and holocausts, its ravaging demons of war and drunkenness and lust and crime—are we to believe that this chamber of horrors of the world we live in was really designed for our benefit and is conducted outright for our advantage? The doctrine seems to verge on the fantastic.

Voltaire's pessimism found a ready popular response after the earthquake and tidal wave at Lisbon, and still any great catastrophe of nature is likely to call forth bitter questionings of the goodness of God. Such reactions do honor to man's sympathies, but they reflect on his insight; perhaps, even on the quickness of his sympathies, for there is no lesson written in the most destructive of cataclysms which is not written as legibly, though less luridly, in every one of the little

unrecorded tragedies of the home and the street, a hundred thousand a day, in every nation under heaven.

As long as things are going well with us; business prosperous, a fire in the furnace, clothes on our backs, and food in the larder; servants to do the drudgery for us; the children healthy; we may find it comparatively easy to believe that this is a pretty genial sort of world, very creditably managed.

But suppose we were of the company of the unfortunates; that we had happened to belong to the working classes of the empire in the day when the message was first spoken; when the working classes were slaves; a slave-driver's knout our daily companion; our life at the mercy of the arrogant lordling in the castle; born to inequality and injustice; with no hope for ourselves or our children—who would then dare talk to us of Love on the throne?

But, in fact, it was the slaves who believed. The rich in their palaces went on with their feasting and revelling, their games and dances, their weaving of pretty odes and odd philosophies, their devising of new ways to spend money and new means

of killing time; and the slaves found God!

Lucian's taunt had already been Paul's boast, that in the young Church of Christ there were "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble."[1]

Such was the miracle of the message of the cross. There, in the death of Christ, where the tragedy of human life reaches its utmost consummation, where at last sheer righteousness rides out as champion into the arena of the world only to be mocked and slain, where pessimism seems to find its perfect vindication; there, somehow, men have found triumphant solution of the riddle of existence, out of the supreme victory of evil have gathered faith that the world is good.

[1] I Corinthians 1 : 26.

II

HIS OWN INTERPRETER

In the centre of the world for Christians rises the little hill of Calvary. "We preach Christ crucified,"[1] said Paul; "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."[2] Wherein then consist the meaning and the power of the cross?

I confess that I tremble to ask the question: in part because an adequate answer would need to embrace the entire message of the Christian faith; and in part for the very reason that the message of the cross is "spiritually discerned," that nothing less than inspiration can in any way fathom its meaning.

Your scientist can tear a watch to pieces and riddle the last secret of its mechanism, but he cannot so readily riddle the secret of a flower. On the one hand, he is as utterly baffled as any child by the mystery of its life, and on the other, he has no con-

[1] I Corinthians 1 : 23. [2] *Idem* 2 : 2.

cern with its beauty, without which the flower would not be worth studying. The scientist is doubtless under divine compulsion to go on tearing roses to pieces, but any garden-lover knows how little he is able to interpret the language which the garden speaks.

"What is there hid in the heart of a rose,
Mother mine?
Ah, who knows, who knows, who knows?
A man that died on a lonely hill
May tell you, perhaps, but none other will,
Little child." [1]

We talk of Paul's forceful logic, but when Paul speaks of the cross he is never the logician, he is evermore the poet. I doubt if there is a single passage in which he deals with the death of Christ that might not properly be set to music. You could not imagine Euclid set to music, and the composer would find little material for his librettos in our theologies. It is only the poet in us that can ever understand the preaching of the cross, and much more is it only the poet who may hope to interpret it to other men.

[1] Alfred Noyes, *The Forest of Wild Thyme.*

Such a conclusion may well make us modest in our preaching, but on another side I am not sure but it may also give us confidence, for we all have something of the poet in us. The little sunbonneted countrywoman pottering over her flowers in the garden, would find herself only nonplussed and abashed by the biologist's jargon about functions and processes and Latin-named species, but if Mr. Noyes should happen along with a quotation or two from *The Forest of Wild Thyme*, her eyes would brighten with quick understanding; the difference in their station would count for nothing in the perfection of their comradeship. All that the scientist could tell her, so far as she understood him at all, she would have to accept on his bare authority, but that which the poet says, seems to her only a happy expression of what she herself has always been feeling for the words to say.

The real message of the cross is the poet's message; which any man may read, written on the cross itself, and which, if we miss, we owe our failure only to the blindness of our own eyes and the dulness of our own souls.

We may place ourselves, in imagination,

at the foot of Calvary on that Friday afternoon. The crowds are moving about for the most part in silence, with here and there a swift whispering, and now and then a rude shout, which serve only to intensify the emotion with which the atmosphere is charged. Over to the left a group of women are sobbing out their grief, and against the dark sky loom three crosses from which there comes now no sound, of entreaty or of pain. On the central cross hangs the limp form of One of whom we had a glimpse in babyhood, when the halo of childish innocence hung over his head and the echo of angel songs filled all the air about the hut in which he was born; whom we saw again for an hour in boyhood, when he stood, erect and clear-eyed, before the doctors in the temple; whom in later life we followed out to the desert solitudes, along the highways of Israel, into mart and synagogue, and found always with the halo of childhood innocence still undimmed over his brow, with the light of boyhood frankness and vigor still unclouded in his eyes, and, beyond these, a new sovereignty in his bearing, his gesture, the tones of his voice; a consciousness of

power mingled with a deepening passion of tenderness, a growing scorn of sham and wrong, a growing love for all beauty and truth, a strange sense of the reality of the unseen which seemed somehow to envelop him with a mantle of awe so that in his presence curiosity, and even hatred, gave place to reverence and fear. And now, at the very prime of young manhood, his earth-story is finished, and he hangs there lifeless on the cross.

What is the meaning we read in this completed tragedy?

Of one thing I am sure; that, as spectators, we shall not feel ourselves to be in the presence of a commercial transaction. For centuries orthodox theology taught that it was just this. Christ having spoken of his death as a "ransom," the theologians, carrying the logic of the word to its rigorous conclusion, declared that God had here, at the price of Christ's life, bought mankind from Satan who, since the fall, had held valid property rights in the race. But certainly no disciple at the foot of the cross could have discerned in the scene any such grotesque meaning.

This was the dominant theory of the

atonement for nearly a thousand years,[1] from Irenæus in the second century to Anselm in the eleventh, with whom another theory passed into the ascendant. John and Paul having spoken of Christ as a "propitiation," the theologians proceeded to carry the logic of this word to its conclusion. The theory has had many variations, but in its most popular modern form[2] it is briefly this: that the immutable divine statutes having been transgressed, it was necessary that some one should be punished, and so, to satisfy the inexorable justice of God, the penalty of the offenses of the race was meted out on Christ.

The theory is sadly lacking in Scriptural warrant. Five centuries before Christ an approved prophet of the Almighty had declared: "If the wicked turn from all the sins that he hath committed . . . he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him."[3] And Moses surely had no thought that he was reflecting on the divine justice when he cried: "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merci-

[1] Stevens, *The Christian Doctrine of Salvation*, p. 138.
[2] *Ibid.*, 154 *f.*
[3] Ezekiel 18 : 21 *f.*

ful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, keeping loving-kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."[1]

These sophistical theories and others like them have this in common, that they are all foisted on the cross from without. No ingenuous mind in the presence of that tragedy could ever have read into it any such meaning. Some one would have to tell us what the cross meant, and we should have to accept its meaning on the sheer authority of our instructor. Christ was called the Logos, the Word, the supreme message of God to the world; but we should have to believe that in this, the culminating event of his life, the message was so concealed that no one could find it without an interpreter!

Is there any message which the cross brings to us directly, written not in the volumes which tell us about it, but on the cross itself? Certain meanings, at least, we may read in it on which all men agree to whom the cross means anything whatever.

[1] Exodus 34 : 6 *f.*

III

THE REVELATION OF THE CROSS

In the presence of the cross we wake up for one thing to a sense of the dignity of human life, the value of a human soul.

In some measure death always teaches this lesson. The sight of a man killed, any man, thrills us with a shock of unutterable catastrophe. He may have been a very useless, insignificant sort of person; had we seen him alive we might, perhaps, have passed him without notice. But *now* we notice him; our hearts stop beating. A man is killed! and it is astonishing how little difference it makes, for the moment at least, what his station or quality. It seems in the lightning-flash of that revelation that he was not so insignificant after all. For the instant we are aware that, by virtue of his very humanity, man is partner in the infinite.

Gethsemane is our evidence of the fulness with which Christ recognized the awfulness of the tragedy which he faced; a tragedy in which, as he forecasted, his

followers were to share through generations. That he chose to persevere, rather than to withdraw to the safety of his bench in Nazareth, meant that he believed, not that life is cheap, but, on the contrary, that in life there is something of such transcendent value as to be worth dying for.

Men ask, regarding war, What is there, and what can there be, that is worth its awful cost in wealth and suffering? In Christ's resolute tread before the Pharisees and the Roman governor, we read his conviction that life's values are worth all the sweat of enduring toil, all the blood of unflinching sacrifice. And as we look at him a voice within, deeper than studied reason, tells us that his conviction is true.

In the presence of the cross, again, we waken to a knowledge of where the true values in life lie. This message likewise is brought to us, more or less clearly, in every experience we have with death. When we gather for the last rites of our friend that has gone, we judge him by somewhat different standards from those we have been used to. Wealth, and reputation, and achievement lose something of their customary glamour; it is of other

things in our friend's life that we are likely to think first. At the cross the revelation becomes absolute; utter poverty, utter disrepute, utter failure, but they all become merely a background against the darkness of which gleams more brilliantly the triumph of his life.

Your prosperous farmer whose soul never scales the fences by which his land is bounded, no longer seems prosperous. Your big man who controls a railroad, but whose soul is as definitely bounded by the fences which run on either side of his iron tracks, no longer seems big. You see them both poor and petty as the mice that infest their barns and sheds.

Christ's soul was as wide as the universe, as deep as the heart of God; he owned the earth, and all heaven besides. A little garden there was on the slopes of Olivet where he "ofttimes resorted" with his disciples, and can we doubt that his ownership of it was more valid than that of the man who happened to hold the title-deeds? Like a poor artist in the presence of a masterpiece, he had no rights in it that he could sell, but he had other rights that he would not sell, at any price you

could name. So in the markets of the Almighty he had bought his rights, which no man could take from him, in every flower and tree and brook between Galilee and Jerusalem, in all the valleys and the hills, the country highroads, and the city streets. He was miserably used by his fellows, but he was the one man of all time who enjoyed the full measure of human friendship; for he saw and served the best in men, that divine best which no other man had ever discerned, which they had not suspected in themselves.

In all things the measure of his love became the measure of his life, and losing all, he yet gained more.

At the cross, then, we know, first, either that Christ was a fool, or—the lesson of Shakespeare's tragedies and Rembrandt's portraits—that man is not a mere bubble on the sea of existence, but a soul; with tremendous issues involved in his life, with destinies of infinite import. And this conclusion, behold, sweeps out into wider conclusions; for to invest human life with meaning and purpose is to invest the universe with meaning and purpose—with God.

At the cross also we know that Christ died the poorest and most bereft waif of misfortune that ever lived, or that the wealth of humanity is not in material possessions and worldly power, but in the treasures of the soul itself. And if, with mysterious authority, our instincts insist that Christ did not miss the way but found it, that it is love alone that unlocks for a man the treasures of the universe, then is it not only the heart of man that has given up its secret, the heart of the universe has given up its secret as well. For our interpretation of human life is, and of necessity must be, our definition of God. He who believes that might makes right worships a god of mere dumb energy, and his real cathedral is the armory or the battleship. He who believes in the supreme value of money thereby confesses his conviction that the literally real ruler of this world is Mammon, and his cathedral is a Woolworth Building. As, at the cross, we realize love to be the conquering law of the human spirit, we waken also to the sublime knowledge that God is love.

Here surely is the last and most amazing of paradoxes, that God's love should

seem to shine in the midst of all the injustice and the pain. But the paradox is a familiar experience with most men who have suffered. It is rather in the hour of grief than in the hour of joy that we have been most ineffably conscious of the divine presence. To any who have pondered on the ways of God with man it will not seem strange that the supreme revelation of his love should come through the death of his first-born.

At Calvary the life of Christ reached its crisis, and not the life of Christ only, but the life of the disciples, and the life of the race. In its presence we dare no longer equivocate; the issue is plain and we must decide. Which are we to take: the God of Cæsar—of Caiaphas and Pilate and Judas—or the God of Christ? The evidence may not be so compelling but that we have our choice, but so much we may understand, that this is the only choice we have.

IV

LIGHT FROM THE WILDERNESS

THE message of Christ's death is but a flashing epitome of the message of all his life. At his tomb one is shocked by no slightest sense of incongruity with the manner of his living. The voice that speaks from Calvary is changed not even in tone from the voice that spake in the upper room, in the synagogue of Nazareth, by Gennesaret. In word and deed, in life and death, his message to the world is one unbroken harmony.

At the very threshold of his ministry he deliberately faced for himself the primary problems of life. For forty days he wrestled with them, fasting and in solitude, and the answers to which he fought his way reveal how consciously he took his stand on those principles which the world has since learned to read in his crucifixion.

The cross has no other commentary equal to Christ's own account of the temptation scene; for the account must come from his lips. But even the temptations do not

give up their secret to the thoughtless. First of all, if we are to understand them, we must free our minds from all haze of magic and miracle and get out into the sunlight of our common workaday world.

We talk of the thirty years of silence in Christ's life, but in reality we have a very considerable knowledge of those early years. Compressed into a sentence or two we have the picture of a sunny, obedient, growing childhood that had no possible place for the wonder-tales with which later generations tried to decorate it. The surprise with which his old neighbors received the report of the strange events of his ministry is evidence enough that there was nothing in his boyhood and young manhood which apparently set him apart from the companions with whom he played and worked and worshipped.

And in his own mind, during this time, what was the course of events? Through it all did he hide a secret, suspected by none other, betrayed by no look or word that escaped him even in the household, but quite clear always to himself; the distinct memory of a former life that he had lived above the earth and that forever dis-

tinguished him from other men? We have no hint certainly that the natural course of his boyhood was convulsed by any such tremendous fact even in his own consciousness.

If there is any one thing on which the gospels agree, on which he himself insisted and his followers after him through all the centuries, it is that, whatever his eternal relation with God, he was yet a man; with a human body not only, but with a human mind, with the ordinary experiences and the common consciousness of humanity. A natural, human life the young carpenter lived in Nazareth, a life of simple fellowship with his village neighbors and of unbroken communion with his heavenly Father.

At last, however, rumor comes to him of John's preaching, and after how long contemplation we know not, he goes down by the stream to identify himself with the work of the new prophet. As he stands by the water the confidence is confirmed in his mind that he is God's chosen instrument for the establishment of a new, divine kingdom in the world. "Thou art my beloved Son," he hears the words, and

their meaning is that the quiet, simple life of Nazareth belongs to the past.

Where, then, is he to go now? what is he to do? He starts off, homeward, perhaps, but he turns aside into the wilderness. He must think. All the problems of life stare at him, demanding solution. So many voices speak within him; to which of them is he to listen?

Of the three specific temptations into which he divides the contest, two of them at first glance scarcely seem to us temptations at all. That he should turn stones into bread to satisfy his hunger; where were the evil of such an act, were the act possible? And that he should leap from the temple-top; what reasonable incentive could he have for such an aberration? Why should it require any peculiar strength of soul to resist so frivolous a suggestion?

Even the remaining temptation could not have been real for Christ if the familiar Docetic idea of him were true. What to him would have been the promise of the cheap glories of this world if the memory had been fresh in his mind of a reign with the Almighty in which he held sway over a million swinging worlds! How ludicrous

must have seemed Satan's suggestion of homage if they had both known as they spoke that, a few brief millenniums before, Christ had created that poor, deformed, fallen spirit and that he could now, if he chose, snuff him out with a word!

The temptations must remain dark to us except as we remember that Christ was "in all points tempted *like as we are*, yet without sin."[1]

"If thou be the son of God," came the suggestion, "command that these stones be made bread." Use your power, that is, for the satisfaction of your animal appetites. And there is no man who does not, soon or late, hear that voice. A few brief years we have here on earth to live; to make a bare living is hard enough; thousands there are and thousands of thousands who lack even so much. If we are better off, have strength enough of hand and brain to provide for ourselves and our families the common physical necessities, why should we not, literally, "therewith be content"? What need for further striving; why the unrest, the troubling ambitions and aspirations? Find bread

[1] Hebrews 4 : 15.

to feed your body and be thankful. Said Christ: "Man shall not live by bread alone."

At the outset he recognized that man is of too noble a birth to be put off with mere physical satisfactions; that he is inveterately superior to the ox. So he began with the assertion of the dignity of human life, of *the infinite values wrapped up in a human soul.*

Then came the suggestion, here is a prize more worthy of a man: "The kingdoms of this world and the glory of them"; honor, power, reputation, achievement, wealth. It is all yours for the asking. You have merely to conform to the rules of the great game; you have merely to be aggressive, selfish, unscrupulous, unpitying, shrewd, efficient, and you will gain all that earth has to offer. Men will look at you and know you for one of the victors, honoring your abilities, respecting your opinions, and envying your success. For this you have only to set a proper value on the things of earth and make them first in your thinking; honor *them*, reverence *them*, worship *them*. And Christ said: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only

shalt thou serve." It was his recognition of *where the true values in life lie.*

And not yet was the devil finished with him. Another shaft he had in his quiver, which gathered to itself all the force of the other two, all the power of evil in the world, to be hurled at the very heart of all that is good.

Christ had chosen to stake his life on the reality of the unseen, the spiritual; in both the former temptations he had appealed from earth to heaven, from the world to God. Said the tempter, There is no God!

What compelling evidence is there that this consciousness of a divine mission is not the fabric of your own dreams? Before you hazard too far, let us make sure; let us institute a little experiment. Through the book of his word he has promised that he will give his angels charge over you to keep you from hurt or harm; then cast yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple and prove it, whether there be anything in these promises of God or not; put him to the test. And Christ answered: "Thou shalt not test the Lord thy God." It was the whole-hearted ven-

ture of his faith in *the reality of a loving God.*

If this temptation did not come to Christ as a trial of faith, then not only was his reply to the tempter pointless, but—far from being in all points tempted like as we are—he was spared the supreme challenge of every other human life. And there is, of course, nothing stranger in the thought of his being tempted to doubt God than in the thought, for example, that, being God, he was tempted to worship Satan.

The form in which the temptation came to him was no accident. He was to cast himself down from the top of the temple; if there was a kindly Hand to protect him, he would be saved from harm; if not, he would be dashed to death at the base of the wall. And welcome death in such circumstances! If this world of the tangible and the ponderable, with its pleasures and treasures that delight for a day and then pall; if this be all there is of the life of man, then would fate be kind to ring down the curtain on the poor, make-believe little show. Only faith in God, and in his serious purposes for the children of men, can save all human life from mockery.

So Christ met the Three Temptations, the three temptations which assail the soul of every man, and in which all temptations are comprehended; the temptation to the life of the animal, the temptation to the life of the conqueror, and the temptation to despair.

Having determined the principles on which his own life was to be built, he had determined them also for his kingdom. It was to be no kingdom of mere material satisfactions, nor of worldly glory and military might. It was to be that kingdom of millennial goodness at which men smiled then as they smile to-day; visionary, Utopian, impossible, but, as God is God, *it was to be.*

V

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

CHRIST'S answer to all the problems of life was—God! The arms of the cross reached outward toward men, but its central shaft pointed upward. This is the first commandment of all, he had said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.

A shallow altruism preaches that our attitude toward our neighbor is the important thing, and that if we unselfishly serve him, our relation with God need not concern us. The conspicuous fallacy in such counsel is, that our relation with God determines, absolutely, the service we render our neighbor.

Here is a father, for example, with an altogether devoted affection for his son, but whose affection prompts him, as was charged against Spartan parents, to instruct the boy in the art of stealing; or, in more modern fashion, to teach him that the chief end of man is the accumulation

of wealth. Here is a mother who, consciously or unconsciously, trains her girl in snobbery or indolence or the cheap ambitions of a frivolous society. It is not love for the child that is lacking, but the love of a child, or of a man or woman, supplies no least direction to the service it impels. The trouble is with the parent's philosophy of life.

And our philosophy of life, according to Christian conceptions, is but one phase of our religion. If God were nothing more than he appears to many a childish imagination, a vast Being seated above the clouds, reaching down now and then to intervene miraculously in the events of earth and receiving us, or refusing to receive us, when we pass from this world to the next, while it would, of course, be very advantageous to gain his favor, our relation with him, our religion, would be only an incident in our lives; parallel with, however much more important than, our relations with our children and our business associates and flowers and books. But if God is the Soul of the universe, the basis of all being and the source of all energy, who "himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all

things," [1] then our relation to him becomes our relation to the universe, and our religion embraces our whole outlook on life, the totality of all that life means to us.

Religion is then no longer merely one of the various departments of human life, its name to be carved at the head of its appropriate column on our public buildings along with that of art and science and commerce; it is the hidden spring of all human activity. It can have no more to do with churches than with schools and banks and factories and kitchens, for it has everything to do with them all.

The religion of Christ is based on the tremendous declaration that God is love. With such a God there can be but one possible relation, the relation of love. And to love him means delight in all that is divine in the universe, in everything through which his life finds expression. "No man hath seen God at any time," [2] says John, but—such is the conclusion of the argument—because his Spirit dwells in his children, therefore, we love him in our love of them. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar."

[1] Acts 17 : 25. [2] I John 4 : 12.

And God's expression of himself is far from exhausted in the souls of men. There is a suggestion of truth, but scarcely more than a suggestion, in Oppenheim's contrast between the revelation of the wayside and that of the street:

"We builders of cities and civilizations walled away
from the sea and the sod
Must reach, dream-led, for our revelations through
one another—as far as God."[1]

Not even in the midst of the Enchanted People can we afford to be blind to the revelation of sea and sod. To miss the appeal of the changing heavens, whether over the sea or over the city; to pass the lilies unnoticed, in the meadow or in the florist's window, is still and always to fail in appreciation of God's glory. Christianity thus opens the door to the widest culture, for it invites interest in all that is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious; in all that is really interesting in the world.

Christ did not preach an utterly selfless altruism, as if a man should despise any enrichment of his own life. "Thou shalt

[1] *Saturday Night.*

love thy neighbor," he said, "*as thyself*." Our love of self is not a primary passion, it is the product of our love of other things, with no meaning except as we value and desire something outside ourselves; he who had no interests in life would have no interest in living. And the more we love God, the wider and deeper our interests become.

Not the renunciation of personality, but its fulfilment, was Christ's ideal; "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." The monastery, the one great ascetic institution of the Church, not only owes its origin to the East, but on Christian soil it has always tended to lose its ascetic character, becoming at its prime the very treasury of all the arts of civilization.

The value we set on things for ourselves is, generally, our only criterion of their value for others, and the Christian ideal contemplates a generous and brotherly society, in which none is enriched at another's expense, and none impoverished that another may abound; though when the choice arises between another's welfare and our own, we choose his—the mother her

child's, the true neighbor his friend's—not because we love our neighbor more than ourselves, but because we love our neighbor more than dollars, or comfort, or any other thing on which we have set our hearts. In the pure love of God the immemorial conflict between love of self and love of others is dissolved.

Self-culture, indeed, is so far from being opposed to self-sacrifice that it alone qualifies us as useful servants. No man will choose you as companion for a visit to the picture-gallery for the mere reason that you love *him;* you must love the pictures. The affection of a person who is never so happy as when he is serving us, but who has no interest in any of the things that interest us, may be more of a burden than of a delight; a bore is not redeemed by devotion.

We cannot serve men out of an empty head any more than out of an empty purse. We cannot introduce our children to the pleasures of Shakespeare until we ourselves have felt the thrill of his magic. What the world requires of us is not a dreary ministry in which we dole out crumbs of conscientious helpfulness, it asks to

share with us our own delight in life. "My joy," said Christ, "I give unto you."

Christian culture, however, and with it Christian ministry, transcend material goods and all arts and sciences, as we know God transcends the things of sense through which we find him revealed. If it has sometimes been misdirected, it has not been essentially untrue to its genius, in denouncing luxury and burning vanities, stopping plays and quarrelling with scientists and otherwise treating lightly the products of the workshop, whether of art, of scholarship, or of commerce. Men generally agree that a nation honors itself when, for the salvation of its soul, it sacrifices the most beautiful of cathedrals rather than yield to a foreign army; and a foreign army is only one, very gross, and not particularly effective instrument for the destruction of souls. Art, grown vain or frivolous, and learning, grown blind to the softer lights, have alike been known more than once to lead men into idolatry, while commerce has been recognized as friendly, even by the most pagan culture, only when reduced to rigorous subjection. The love of God demands glad surrender

of any of the things that are seen, and temporal, in defense of principles, which are unseen and eternal. Always, indeed, it offers us a cross to be borne, on which the lower desires may be crucified, that the higher aims may be fulfilled.

And Christian culture goes further still. Behind all the phenomena of earth we believe that a mysterious heart beats, a mysterious voice whispers, that we stand forever in the face of an infinite Spirit that yearns, not for reverence only, but for companionship, admitting us to the secret chamber of his holy, immediate presence, in prayer.

And we can never think our service of any other man complete until we have led him into this inner sanctuary. Not that we are tempted to forget even his crudest physical necessities; it has never been the most spiritual man who has been readiest when his brother asked for a fish to give him a sermon. But we remember that we found our own admission into the kingdom, not through any form of material prosperity, but through that new outlook on life which is known as faith in Christ, and which finds its consummation in per-

sonal fellowship with God; that so, while others were paying their lives for cap and bells, we have got heaven for the asking. And our deepest desire for every other man must be that he share with us in this life-giving experience.

VI

THE LOVE OF GOD

THE formula of the two great commandments was not new with Christ. He found it in Deuteronomy, and all the Old Testament is its commentary. But in him for the first time the world saw it illustrated, interpreted, in a personality; therefore in him for the first time the world learned its meaning, for life is of too complicated a nature to be intelligibly expressed in any other terms than those of life itself.

The life of Christ is the law of our life, and it is—law; law not in the old, Mosaic, autocratic sense of a decree issued from without, which Paul insisted had no place under the Christian order, but in the new, scientific sense of a principle working within; woven into the constitution of the spiritual universe as inextricably as the laws of gravitation and the conservation of energy are woven into the universe of matter.

Thrust your hand into the furnace and

the hand is burned; such is the law of fire, it is the way fire works. Violate the principles of Christ in your living and the soul is destroyed; such is the law of sin, it is the way sin works. And these laws there is no breaking; you may at most defy them and *be* broken.

Withdraw your hand from the furnace, however, and the burning ceases, the wonderful process of healing begins. Modern science has disclosed nothing more amazing than the devices which God has contrived through nature to cure the wounds of disease and accident. Cut your finger, and at once a host of little soldiers is mustered to repair the breach, with a perfection of swift mobilization beyond that of the most efficient of modern governments.

And he has made like provision for the cure of souls. "Unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings."[1] From Moses to Malachi the message of the prophets is forgiveness on the ground of penitence. But there can be no forgiveness on any other ground. For God to make exception, to rule that in any case sin should

[1] Malachi 4 : 2.

not destroy, would be an abrogation of law in which the worlds would fly into a chaos madder than if the bonds of gravity should relax their grasp among the atoms and the stars.

We are accustomed to accounts of Calvary which imply a conflict in the mind of God; his justice demanding that men be punished, his love seeking a way to save. If we were to imagine a conflict in God's mind it would be as sensible, more sensible, to think of his love demanding punishment —that by the pain of it men might be recalled from their sin; and his justice intervening—because they are so childish and predisposed to evil. And even this, as I hope the reader will insist, is not altogether sensible.

In fact there is, and can be, no such conflict. The love revealed in the cross is no mere amiable sentiment by which the strict demands of justice are modified. It is as far as possible from the indulgent mood in which moral offenses are overlooked, and it is further still, *if* possible, from the opiate philosophy of those who humor their indolence and dull the saving pain of their sympathies by denying the

reality of ugliness and wrong. It is the love that issues in righteousness and sacrifice, an unsparing and ruthless love, too intense to count the cost of redemption.

The polytheist was not all wrong; the tide of the world is indeed against us, and life confronts us as a battle to be fought. But because we believe God is with us in the conflict, therefore our response to the ills of life is not resignation, but resistance. And, more than this, we believe that God is back of the conflict itself, that the whole baffling scheme of things is designed for our good; not, it is true, to minister to our comfort and ease, but to aid in the long, hard process of suppressing the brute in us and liberating the divine.

For, after all, what is our indictment against the world-order but that we ourselves are involved in it? Our bodies are of a piece with the vast machine of the swinging suns, with its incomprehensible, lightning-flashing, thunder-cracking energies of electricity and fire and gravity, and who knows what besides! And sometimes, by our folly or our thoughtlessness or through no fault of our own, we slip into the path of a passing bolt or find ourselves

caught in the cogs. But, terrible as is the risk, awful as is the tragedy when it comes, who would forego the power that comes from our partnership in the cosmos; the power of laying hold on nature's energies and harnessing them for the purposes of our own choosing? Who, even, would miss the thrill of the daily adventure with death?

And we are of a piece as well with the still more marvellous mechanism of human society, with its spiritual energies and catastrophes, in comparison with which the most volcanic convulsions of the physical are but the crackling of thorns under a pot. Adam sinned, and I pay the penalty. Heredity curses me with the follies of a thousand generations. One man turns drunkard, and no one knows how many innocents reap the harvest of his bestiality. One nation goes mad with ambition, and the whole world is drenched in blood. But where is the man who would live isolated from the sweeping currents of our common life! Because we share the heritage of the world's wrongs, therefore, also, we share the heritage of its heroisms and devotions. Never a patriot achieved the

emancipation of hill-tribe or nation, never scientist discovered a new law, nor inventor contrived a new device, nor pioneer opened the way to a new country; never poet framed a song, nor prophet thrilled men with a word of truth, nor workman accomplished an honest day's work, but we are richer for his labor. And the liberator whose cry was unheard, the scientist for whom the secret did not unfold, the explorer, poet, prophet, workman, who tried and failed, but still tried—the Dreamer who would found a new, strange kingdom over the earth, in which the child should lead and the strong should serve, and who came to the end of his labors to find a handful of weeping women as his subjects, his treasure a crown of thorns and the nails that pierced his feet and hands; he also has made his contribution to our heritage, not so much indirectly through the work that he did, but directly, as if the very man that he was had become a magic, transforming fluid to be poured into the crucible in which the Lord God keeps the material of human souls.

Our buffetings by fate and circumstance are the price we pay for our divinity, our

participation in God, our partnership in the universal life. The world is one,

> "One God, one law, one element";

if we violate the law, we cut ourselves off from the Source of life, and the pain of our dying thrills through the universe to its very centre in the heart of God himself. If we obey, we save our own life not only, but with every least victory over the evil in us, with every baffled effort to further a good work in the world, we hasten the coming of the kingdom, that

> "one far-off divine event
> To which the whole creation moves."

VII

EASTER

In the cross the disciples saw the supreme vindication of the love of God; but they did not see this at once. On the contrary, their first view of Calvary revealed only the tragedy and the failure. They looked on it as men might look on the ruins of a vast temple that was to have crowned the earth. "We hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel,"[1] but the hopes were of the past.

And then, suddenly, their darkness scattered. Something broke upon the night of their despair and they awoke to find themselves possessed of a passion of enthusiasm that sent them out over the earth carrying a message of hope which was to kindle the heart of mankind into song. They themselves said that Christ had risen from the dead, that they had seen him and held converse with him, back from the grave. We cannot, of course, prove that this was not a baseless delusion; it

[1] Luke 24 : 21.

is all safely beyond the domain of demonstration, though scepticism has yet to explain whence came to these disheartened men the sudden conviction of so tremendous an event as the resurrection. But at least they believed that he had returned, and how their faith flooded the darkened world with light! Dead with Christ, partakers so far as they followed him in all the losses he endured, they were also risen with him, the partners in his abiding gain.

Immortality! there was the inner secret of life's mystery. And it needs immortality to riddle the mystery. For, however far we may get with our arts and sciences and social organizations, if we are to believe that the end of all the achievements of earth is to be moon-plane barrenness, until the trump of some stellar cataclysm shall waken the cold frame into a resurrection of fire so that the long struggle may begin again, then can we not escape the feeling that the whole race of men is not *worth* serving, its triumphs a pretense. All the labor and the contest and the heroic endeavor, and at last nothing to show for the work of a world's ages-long lifetime! We mortals draw back shuddering from

such a conclusion; for us if any value is to be real, it must be somehow permanent.

"Weary waiting and weary striving,
Glad outsetting and sad arriving;
What is it worth when the goal is won?"

In the light of Easter morning the meaning of the cross becomes clear, and the meaning of the whole life from Bethlehem to Calvary; the meaning of death and suffering and defeat, and of all life from star-dust to star-dust again. The life and the death and the resurrection all speak the same language. If the lesson of the empty tomb is a delusion, if immortality is a false hope, the world is insane; no otherwise may we hope to justify our sense of the dignity of human life, of the supremacy of the spiritual, of the love of God. But far within me I recognize the language of Christ's life as the half-forgotten speech of my own soul, and I take the words on an authority beyond that of our poor, human evidences, as a message from home.

And behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; HEAR YE HIM.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01073 6025

Date Due			
13 '42			
Ap 27 '43			
Je 16 '43			
Jl 12 '43			
Ag 16 '43			